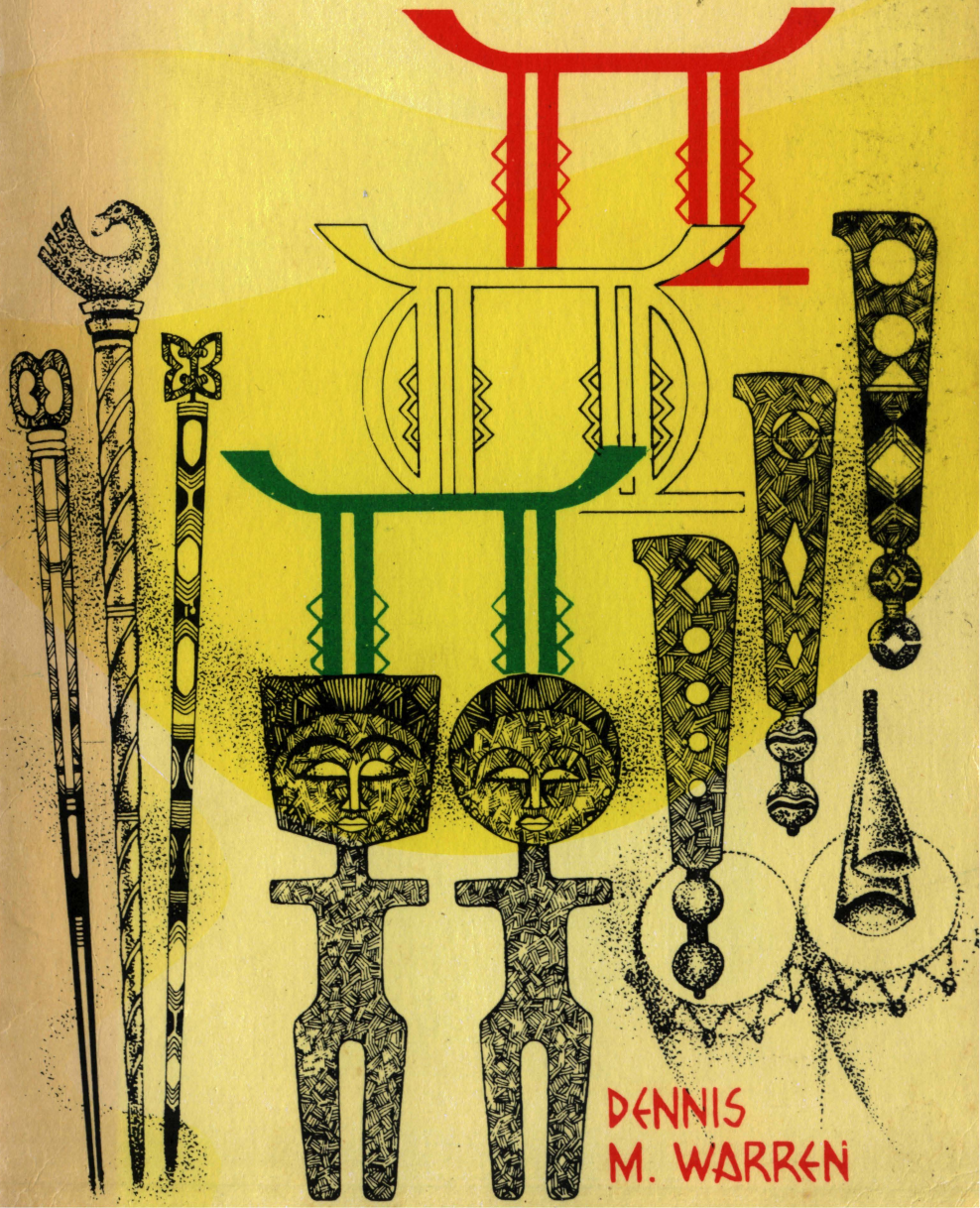
THE AKAN OF GHANA



DENNIS M. WARREN

THE AKAN OF GHANA

An Overview of the Ethnographic Literature

By

Dennis M. Warren

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CONTENTS

Page

Preface

I. Introduction 6

II. Life Cycle 10
A. Birth . . ..
B. Puberty .. ..
C. Marriage .. ..
D. Death .. ..

III. Religion 22
A. Its place in Akan culture .. .. ..
B. Genealogy of the Gods .. .. ..
C. Priests .. ..
D. Ritual and medicine .. .. ..
E. Ancestors .. ..
F. Witches and other spirits .. ..
G. Festivals .. ..

IV. Family and Social Structure 34
A. Family .. ..
B. Kinship .. ..
C. Social Stratification .. .. ..
D. Inheritance .. ..

V. Government and Law 41
A. Traditional government .. .. ..
B. Law . . ..
C. Land tenure and alienation .. ..

VI. The Arts 56
A. Music .. ..
B. Folklore .. ..
C. Wood-carving .. ..
D. Terracotta .. ..
E. Weaving .. ..
F. Metal works .. ..
G. Color .. ..

APPENDIX 73

BIBLIOGRAPHY 76

PREFACE

The material contained in this book consists largely of an overview of the ethnographic material which has been published on the Akan of Ghana, who comprise of the Asante, Akyem, Akuapem, Akwamu, Aowin, Ahanta, Assin, Brong, Kwahu, Wassa, Denkyira, Sefwi, Fante and others. Because of the bulk of the material in existence and the difficulty in obtaining copies of what is in print, a simple volume distilling the relevant information about culture in readable form has always been needed, and this book by Dennis M. Warren, attempts with considerable success, to meet that need.

Within a few short pages, the author takes the reader through the usually complex maze of Akan culture with admirable skill and enviable simplicity of style. And although some of the cultural practices are no longer to be seen, and some of the beliefs which gave rise to them are no longer held, much of Akan traditional culture still survives especially in the rural areas, and to some extent in the urban areas, as an integral part of the emerging national culture of modern Ghana.

It is hoped that this summary will provide visitors to Ghana with confidence to enter into and participate in some of the more traditional aspects of Akan culture, and to experience the exceptional friendliness and hospitality of Ghanaians in general, rural Ghanaians in particular. The material contained in this book is also of inestimable value to the Ghanaian who needs to understand his or her culture better, and it is fervently hoped that this book will trigger off similar works on some of the other ethnic groups in Ghana, to contribute not only to national self-understanding but also to international understanding.

For those not familiar with certain anthropological terminology, a brief appendix has been added.

This present volume is the product of the tireless and painstaking efforts of Dr K.N. Bame and Mr K. Ampom-Darkwa both of the Institute of African Studies, who revised and updated the original material.

KOFI ASARE OPOKU

June, 1986
Legon

Visitors who intend doing any serious study of the people and their culture may contact

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MAP OF AFRICA
SHOWING GHANA

INTRODUCTION

GHANA, the first African colony south of the Sahara to gain independence (6th March, 1957), is a political entity encompassing the area of latitude 4½ to 6½ degrees N to 11 degrees N and the area between longitude 10 degrees E. and 30 degrees W. Its southern border is the Gulf of Guinea; it is borded on the west, north and east by the francophone countries of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), and Togo. The land area of the country is 92,000 square miles (the size of Oregon); within it live approximately 12,000,000 people. The country is divided into ten regions; the central government also recognizes 108 traditional states. The mean temperature for the country as a whole is about 80 degrees F. Rainfall varies with geographical location and the season, dry and rainy.

In southern Ghana (west and south of the Volta River system) and in south-east Ivory Coast are a large number of similar cultural groups to which the generic term "Akan" is applied. The groups are homogeneous both linguistically and culturally and include the Fante, Asante, Brong, Twi (Twifo), Wasa, Denkyira, Sehwi, Assin, Adansi, Akyem (Akim), Akwapim, and Akwamu. In the Ivory Coast there are the Anyi (Agni) and the Baule.

In Ghana the most powerful and most well-known are the Ashanti (Asante) people. Ashanti was a conquest state of semi-autonomous chiefdoms under a paramount chief whose symbol of office was the Golden Stool; the Ashanti confederacy was established in 1701, and it was finally broken by the British in 1900. The British made Ashanti a colony in 1901.

The next largest Akan group in Ghana is the Fante which was annexed by the British in 1874 to the Gold Coast Colony. In the east are the important Akyem, Akwamu, Akwapim, and Kwahu groups. The northern-most Akan are the Brong. In the Ivory Coast are the Agni and the Baule, Akan groups, which, according to oral history, migrated from an area south of Ashanti sometime around 1700.

The Akan groups occupy several vegetative zones. Along

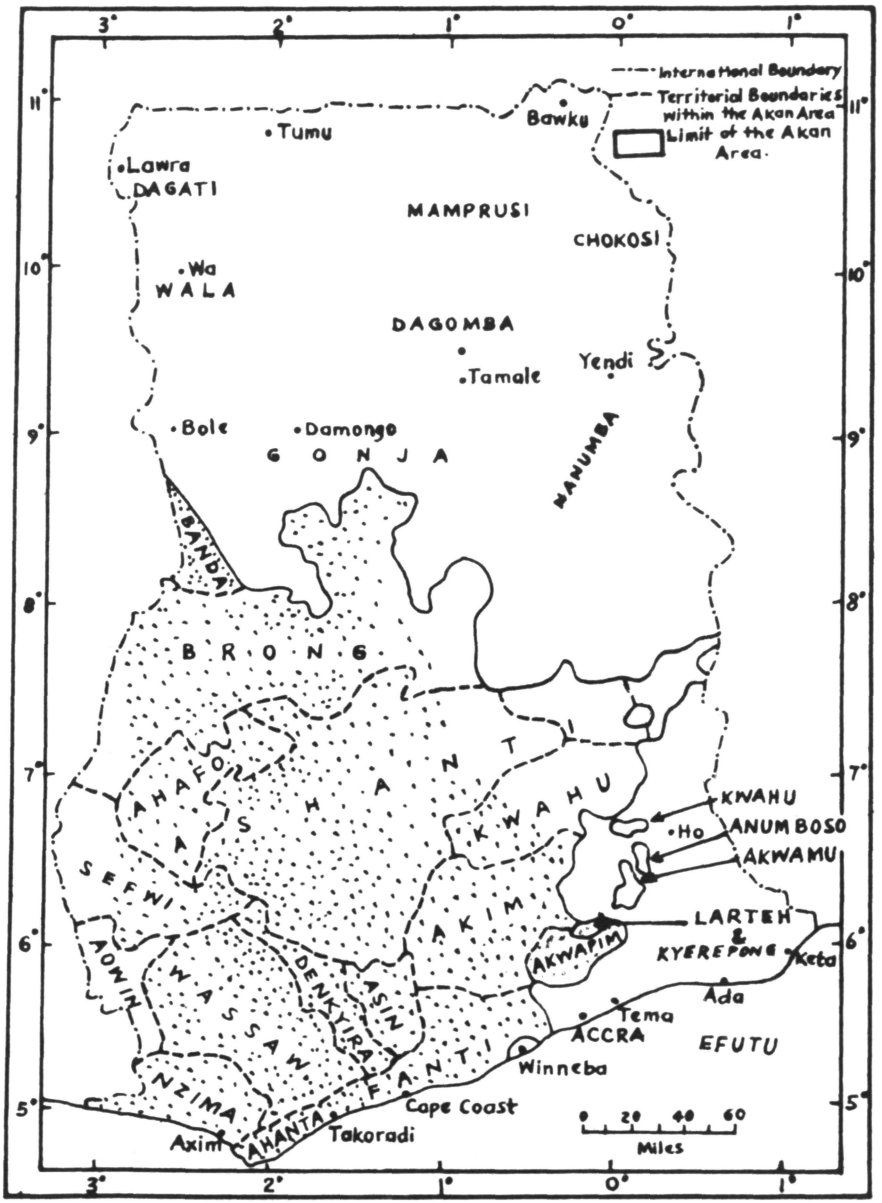
the Fanti coast is coastal scrub and grassland with occasional strand and mangrove vegetation; this area has an average rainfall of 33" a year. In the extreme SW corner is true tropical rainforest with rainfall averaging 86". Most of the Akan live in moist, semi-deciduous forest with average yearly rainfall of about 61". In the extreme north of Akan territory, one finds guinea savanna-woodland, where rainfall decreases to 43" a year.

The economy is based primarily on hoe agriculture and cultivation of cocoa as an export crop. Yams and coco-yams (taro) are the main staples. Sudanic crops do not assume the importance of staples, due primarily to the climate. American crops have assumed a great importance, expecially cocoa, which was imported by Tetteh Quarshie in 1879 from Fernado Po. Ghana is now the world's second leading producer in this crop. Other important American crops are maize, cassava (manioc), groundnuts (peanuts), pepper, and tomatoes.

At present much of the forest wild-life is depleted, and less hunting goes on. Fishing is most important to the Fanti whose large fishing force manoeuvre their canoes along the entire Guinea Coast. Other Akan fishermen are the Ashanti who live around the shores of the sacred Lake Bosomtwi and those who live along the banks of the Volta River such as the Akwamus. All Akan people raise sheep, goats, and chickens, along with some pigs, guinea fowls, ducks and pigeons. Dogs are kept for hunting, and an occasional cat is also seen. Due to the tsetse-fly which is especially prevalent in the Afram Plains (where human population density is about ten per square mile), cattle are not raised, although they are brought from northern Ghana for southern consumption. An occasional horse is also seen among the Akan.

There are regular and highly developed markets. Division of labour is such that most petty trade is carried out by women, who have considerable economic power. Men are responsible for hunting, fishing, and clearing land; both sexes participate in agriculture. Most people live in compact villages and towns; a few large urban centres such as Kumasi and Cape Coast have existed for at least 200 years. Other Akan

MAP OF GHANA
SHOWING THE AKAN AREA



towns of historical significance include Elmina where the first Europeans to visit the country, the Portuguese, landed in 1471 and built a castle purposely for trade in gold, ivory, etc. and later in slaves.

Dwellings are typically rectangular with an interior quadrangle for cooking and recreation. In rural areas wattle and daub houses have thatch for roofs; in urban areas mud-clay bricks covered by an outer layer of concrete; iron or aluminium roofing are found.

Physically the Akan peoples are Negroid. Linguistically they speak a number of mutually intelligible dialects of Akan, such as fante, Asante-Twi and Akwapim Twi.

The Akan peoples live in an area rich in gold, diamond, and bauxite deposits; men have worked the gold* and diamond fields traditionally for centuries and presently the mines employ a large number of men.

The Akan groups are characterized by matrilineal descent, inheritance, and succession. The Fanti and Ashanti have exogamous patrilineages also, making a double descent system. There is polygamy. In traditional Ghana when custom had determining influence on social life, a preference was given to cross-cousin marriage which among other things ensured that, in spite of matrilineal system of inheritance, the daughters of a man benefited from his property which they and their mother helped him to acquire. Local endogamy and traditional slavery and debt slavery also prevailed. There are no endogamous castes and no initiation schools.

This book will cover five major cultural domains for the Akan peoples (the life cycle, family and social structure, religion, government and law, and the arts); the material presented is representative of the Ghanaian Akan groups in a broad sense, although details are certain to vary from one area to another. Many of the examples come from materials written on the Ashanti.

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* For accounts of how gold was traditionally mined or worked, gold weights, and the role which gold and gold weights played in the economic and cultural life of the Akan, the reader may refer to Anquandah, 1982; Ehsanulla, Lilian, 1964; and Jeffreys, 1964.

II. LIFE CYCLE

A. BIRTH

One Ashanti myth claims that the first two humans who descended from the sky, were taught how to procreate by a python who lived in the Bosommuru River. Procreation *(abawo)* is conceived as the mixing of a woman's blood *(mogya)* with a man's spirit *(ntoro)* during sexual intercourse; blood is transmitted exclusively by females, the spirit only by males.

The Akan have a horror of any given family becoming exinct, since there would then be no one to tend the ancestral shrines; this horror underscores the attitudes toward, and divorces from, barren women. A marriage is never completely binding until a child is born. Childlessness is "the greatest of all personal tragedies and humiliations" for both male and female (Fortes 1950: 262), a barren woman being called *obonin,* a childless man *ɔkrawa.* Childless married couples are derided, the man by being called "wax penis" *(kɔte krawa).* Traditionally both childless male and female at death had thorns driven into the soles of their feet.

All libations and prayers always include the request for numerous children. A child living after many preceding children have died is called *bagyina ba* (a child born to stay and pave the way for more children to follow); such a child is always obvious for its long hair, grown and plaited in the style of the traditional priest, with charms in it.

When the woman conceives, special medicine *(bɔtɔ)* is rubbed into small cicatrices cut in the forehead and joints. The child as an embryo is called *mota;* as a foetus it is termed *ba-duaa* ('child-tree-seed'). It is a taboo to mention to a pregnant woman the fact that she is pregnant; any miscarriage may be blamed on that person. Miscarriage is also attributed to such things as eating sweets, the sight of blood. In those rare cases when a woman desires to abort she drinks *abiniburu* leaves *(Alternanthera repens)* with salt, or *ɔpam* bark mixed with eggs and cold water.

The last month of pregnancy is invariably spent in the woman's own clan village where she will deliver in her

mother's house; no men are allowed during parturition. The birth is a sign that the father's ntoro, which was invoked in the *Afodie* ceremony while his wife was six-seven months pregnant, has taken good care of the developing foetus.

Rattray explains that every male and female has three distinct souls:

(a) *Mogya* which is the blood and comes from the mother and her lineage *(abusua);*
(b) *Ntoro* or *Sunsum* which comes from the father, and
(c) *Ɔkra,* derived from the spirit of the day on which the person was born.

The *ɔkra* enters the child at birth, the *mogya* and *ntoro* at conception. The *ɔkra* is the sustainer of the person's conscience and life; it is that part of *Ɔbɔadeɛ* (God, the creater) which is within every man *(onipa).* It helps act as the spiritual force of the conscience *(tibowaa)* and has an influence on the person's actions. The *sunsum* is a spiritual substance responsible for *suban,* character, genius, temper, or quality of a person. It can leave the body during sleep and can be attacked by witchcraft.

Busia also uses *sunsum* synonymously with *ntoro.* The *ntoro* concept builds a spiritual bond between the father and child which balances the pysiological bond between mother and child. The *ntoro* are exogamous patrilineal divisions which are given as7, 8, or 12 in number by different investigators. Each *ntoro* has a specific day of the week set aside for its observance, and each has a set of totems. The most important division is called Bosommuru; this is supposedly the first *ntoro* and eight Ashanti kings have come from it (including Osei Tutu, Opoku Ware, and Karikari). Its day of observance is Tuesday and its totems include the python, dog, ox, and cow. Each *ntoro* transmits a given basic character to its respective members; e.g. those with Bosommuru *ntoro* are characterized as distinguished, those with Bosompra as tough. Members of each *ntoro* use the same forms of response to greetings.

The *ntoro* or sunsum of a child, the same as its father's perishes with the person at death: its okra which is always unique returns to its Creator at death.

Among the Akan, 19 sets of twins are born for every 1,000 births; 1.2 sets or triplets are born for every 1,000 births. Twins are not killed; a female twin is the potential wife of the king, the male twin is a potential elephant-tail switcher at the king's court. Triplets are honoured, but hermaphrodites *(busufuo)* were buried alive in the past. Traditionally the third, sixth and ninth children are lucky, the fifth unlucky.

Belief in re-incarnation substantiates the idea that at birth a ghost-mother mourns the loss of her ghost-child; hence for eight days no one treats the child well and the living mother is considered unclean. At birth the child assumes its day-name; after eight days an outdooring ceremony *(mpuei)* is held at which time a person in the baby's same *ntoro* group gives it its second name, usually after a relative. This ceremony may also be called *ntetea;* the father presents both mother and child with gifts; after the ceremony the mother may carry the child on her back.

The outdooring or naming ceremony is a social event which centers on the child's relationship to the spirits and the earth. The child's sponsor may give it specific advice and admonitions and pray for hoped-for social accomplishments. The ceremony strengthens a belief in the ancestors and builds solidarity in the lineage. The actual name is important because the *suban* or character is influenced by its name and will emulate the character of the person whose name one was given. The day-name is called *akradin* (soul's name), the second name *agyadin* (father's name); the actual naming is *Abadinto.*

In many areas, until recently, 50% infant mortality occured; many types of charms, rituals and other aspects of religion dealt with the explanation of such a high mortality. In the olden days if a new-born baby died before eight days the mother angrily whipped and mutilated the body, wrapped it in sword grass, put it in a pot and buried it near the women's latrine; this was to discourage its return again.

The parents dressed in white, an unpardonable insult at a funeral; this deliberate antithesis of funeral rites was also to discourage the dead baby from returning again. No sexual intercourse is allowed for forty days after birth. It is a great

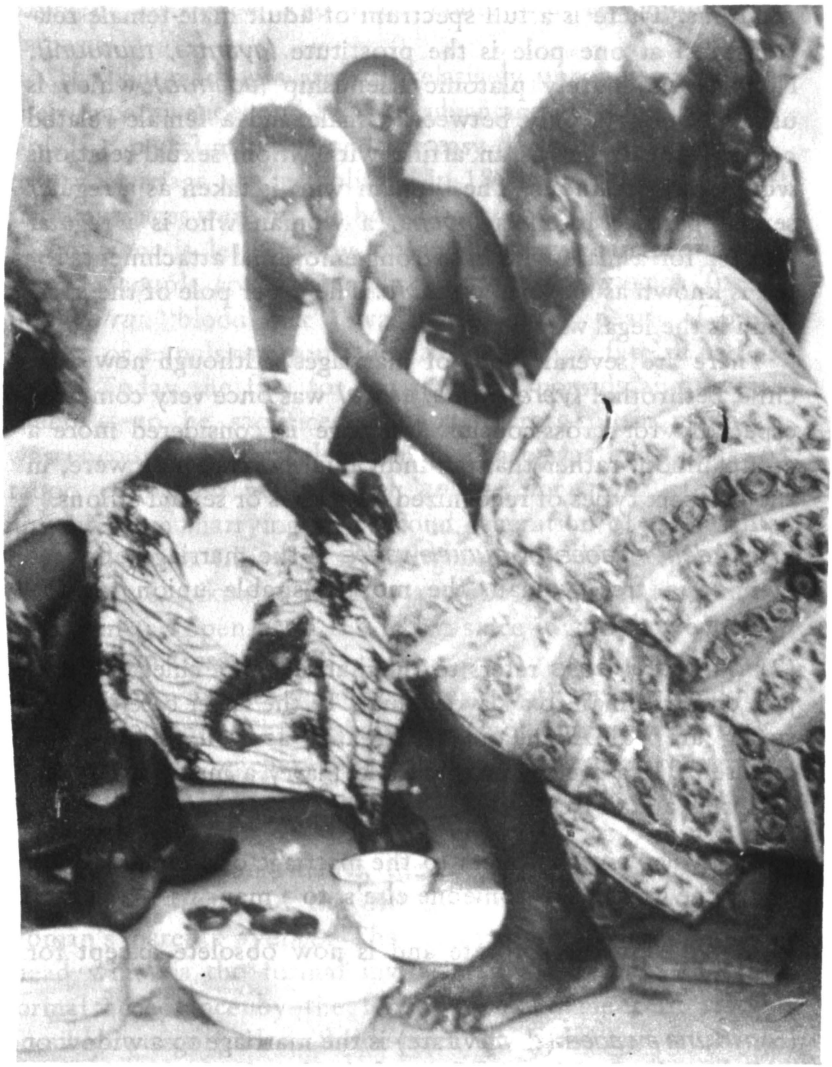
disgrace to die in child-birth and the corpse of the mother is abused.

B. PUBERTY

None of the Akan groups has formal initiation schools for either male or female adolescents. Neither circumcision nor clitoridectomy is formally practised.

The only puberty rites, now common only in rural areas, are for adolescent girls who have begun to menstruate *(kyima).* On the first menses the girl's mother announces it and the old women begin to sing *bra* songs, *bra* being a euphemism for menses. At daylight the girl's armpits and pubes are shaved and she is dressed in finery and gold ornaments. Seated in the street she receives gifts; at six in the evening the mother publicly washes the girl and cuts her hair. Among some Akan groups this public washing is done with water specially fetched and treated for the rite but among others the bathing is done at a riverside. After the public bath, the girl is fed with special meal (mashed yam and boiled eggs) known as *'brato'.* This is the only time when women may beat drums, and only the *donno,* hour-glass type. There is a belief that when a girl has her first menses an old woman will soon die, hence one notes the weeping of many old women. For five days after these rites the female is a person in the *bra* state, *(obrafo);* after these five days she re-dresses in her finery and goes to thank those who attended the ceremony. She is expected to marry soon.

Menstruation itself is considered defiling; Menstruation women in many rural villages are still restricted to a hut in the forest *(bra dan)* until the period is over. The menstruating woman has several taboos. She cannot cross sacred rivers, sell food, or offer food to a chief. In the olden days if she entered the stool room she would be immediately put to death. It is also taboo for a menstruating woman to sleep with a man.



Puberty scene, feeding the initiate with boiled egg and mashed yam.

C. MARRIAGE

Sexual relations among the Akan, both pre-marital and extra-marital, are tolerable if they don't disrupt normal social relations. There is a full spectrum of adult male-female relationships; at one pole is the prostitute *(gyantra; tuutuuni).* Next is the purely platonic friendship *(adamfo)* which is usually possible only between a male and a female related consanguineally or as an affine with whom sexual relations would be incestuous. The woman who is taken as a regular sexual partner is one's *mpena;* a woman who is a regular partner for a male who has strong emotional attachments for her is known as his lover or *ɔdɔfo.* The other pole of the spectrum is the legal wife, *yere.*

There are several types of marriages. Although now rare, child bethrothal *(yere akoda, asiwa)* was once very common, especially for cross-cousins. Marriage is considered more a group union, rather than an individual bond. There were, in the past, six types of recognized marriages or sexual unions.

(1) *Adehyewadeɛ* or *hunu awadeɛ* is the marriage of a free man to a free woman, the most desirable union for the woman.

(2) *Afona awadeɛ* refers to the marriage of a chief to a subject or a free man to a slave woman. In the latter case the offspring are half-Akan and are treated as well as full-Akan children. (If a free woman should marry a male slave, their offspring are all free).

(3) *Awowa awadeɛ* refers to the marriage of a female pawn, either the groom's or someone else's, to a man.

(4) *Ayetɛ* is the sororate and is now obsolete except for chiefs.

(5) *Kuna awadeɛ* (the levirate) is the marriage to a widow or widows inherited by the heir of the late husband. This has survived in all classes. Not to take the widow and her children is evil or unlucky *(mmusuo),* and the deceased's *saman* or ghost may seek revenge on the heir. Public opinion will also be strong against the heir. A year must elapse prior to the heir

having sexual intercourse with a widow. The widow is never compelled to marry the heir.

(6) *Mpena awadeɛ* is common-law marriage, without the payment of *aseda,* the male could not claim adultery damages.

Christian marriages are still relatively uncommon due to their expensiveness and their disadvantages, making it impossible for plural marriage and for easy divorce. Although statutory marriage was established in 1884, by 1960 only 604 such marriages were on the books.

Exogamy is less strictly observed today than previously when a couple could mix neither *ntoro* nor *mogya.* Incest *(mogyafra;* "blood mix") was punished by death of both parties or expulsion from the clan of both, a fate as bad as death. Today the fine for incest is five pounds and several sheep – to be sacrificed. Although cross-cousin marriage was encouraged, parallel cousin marriage was incestuous. A taboo connected neither with *abusua* nor *ntoro* prohibits anyone from marrying any second generation of ascendants or descendants. Likewise second generation of ascendants or descendants. Likewise there is a taboo against having intercourse in the open or in the forest since it would offend the earth deity, *Asase Yaa.*

If a woman marries she must observe both her own and her husband's taboos. The husband need not observe the wife's. Once the wife reaches menopause, she does not recognize her husband's taboos, proof that *ntoro* has a role in conception.

In marriage arrangements, the father pays the son's head money *(tiri sika)* and the offering from the groom to the woman's parents *ayɛdeɛ.* The affiance fee *(ti-nsa, tiri nsa)* 'head wine' is the formal invitation by the male and the formal acceptance by the female. The payment of *aseda,* possibly categorized as 'bride-price' gives the new husband rights over the female for sex and for work; he can claim compensation for adultery.

In traditional marriage usually two guineas and a bottle of schnapps or rum would be given to the bride's family; the first glass of rum would be poured as libation to the ancestors

before witnesses. Rattray says the "bride-price" for a princess was eight pounds, for a commoner ten shillings and six-pence and for slave girls, seven shillings and two-pence.[1] Warrington too gives the following revised fees for a royal *(ɔdehyeɛ)* nine pounds and six shillings plus four bottles of gin; for a commoner one pound, three shillings and six-pence plus two bottles of gin. The *aseda* is, at best, a minimal type of bride-price; even today it represents a minimal financial burden. The *aseda* does not enrich the family, since it is distributed among the witnesses.

The most desirable marriage is cross-cousin. Ego has absolute right to marriage of his FaSiDa or his MoBrDa; both he may normally call wife, *yere.* The last five Asantehenes have married their MoBrDa, and three out of the last nine queen mothers *(ahemmaa),* it is certain, married their MoBrSo. About 80% of the maternal uncles asked by Rattray as to the reason for cross-cousin marriages said it was to maintain the name which carried the same *ntoro* and the same *mogya;* this was more important when the family group was the centre of the social world. If an uncle or a chief compels a niece to marry his son, it insures not only the return of his blood (which occurs no matter whom she marries) but also that the offspring will possess his *ntoro* spirit by taking his or his ancestor's name.

Marriage residence is usually patrilocal. On the night of the wedding the test for virginity used to be a bloodstained sheet, but this custom is now obsolete, the next morning the husband would cover his wife with white clay and send her in the streets as a sign of her intact maidenhood (when he first slept with her). A wedding feast *(ayeforo aduane)* is the reward to virgin brides for their maidenheads. Because descent is matrilineal and residence is patrilocal, the wife's position is one of isolation and independence among strangers; her private property always remains her own. Fortes found in a 1950 survey that about one third of the wives reside with their husbands, while 40-50% live in matrilineal households under female heads.

1. In current Ghana currency: princess ₵16.00, commoner ₵1.05; slave girl 72 pesewas.

Divorce *(hyireguo)* is neither anti-social nor religious sacrilege. Usually it is the male who takes the initiative, and he retains responsibility for the support of the children. Since the first aim of marriage is children, barrenness is a major source of divorce. Other grounds are incompatibility, adultery, a quarrelsome nature, and witchcraft. Divorce is also termed *awadegyae*.

Divorce sometimes is somewhat difficult since marriage is more a union between two extended families rather than between two individuals. Still divorce is no extreme emotional blow for the children, because of the extended family system. In divorces, the wife often takes the girls and baby boys and the husband the boys, although there is no actual law about sharing children after divorce.

Polygamy is ideal for the Akan; it is much more prevalent in the rural areas where additional wives make the farming duties lighter for the family. In the urban areas expenses usually curtail polygamy sharply.

D. DEATH

Old age is not tied to loneliness and neglect but increased respect, family care and service as an elder. The more progeny one has, the more respect and security one has in old age; hence the great emphasis on bearing children and the ridicule of barrenness. Without children one's security in old-age may be very precarious. Grandparents are the most honoured in the extended family since they represent the norms of tradition. One enjoys old age and doesn't look on death with anxiety. The position of the aged is now weakening due to (1) increased dependence on monetary wealth (2) the feeling that inheritance of social rank is outmoded and should be replaced by achievement, (3) the belief that ancestors may be less strong than believed, (4) the rise of political parties, (5) scattering of family members, (6) abandonment of old traditions, and (7) accumulated wisdom of the elders respected less than school learning.

Everyone is expected to die, but at death an explanation must be found for why the person died at that given time.

Ancestors can punish descendants for sins; they thus guard the society's morality. Bad conduct may lead to a premature death, whereas old age is witness to good conduct.

At death one's *mogya* becomes a *saman* (ghost) and will enter the spirit world *(samando).* The *ɔkra* survives and returns to *Nyankopɔn* (God). A person's *ntoro* does not enter the *samando,* but remains behind to care for the man's children, who have the same *ntoro.* The *saman* awaits re-incarnation by means of some woman in the same *abusua.*

Funerals are social events which stress the unity in the lineage and the town; they help re-affirm cultural values. The size of the funeral will be determined by the age, status, occupation, personality, and religion of the deceased; the size of the funeral in a way sums up the man's lifetime accomplishments. People do honour to both the man and the lineage by attending.

There are stages to a funeral: (1) preparation of the corpse, (2) pre-burial mourning, (3) internment, (4) after-burial mourning, (5) periodic mourning. If a person is on the verge of death, it is a sacred duty for a blood relative to put water three times down the throat of the dying person.

During the preparation of the corpse no wailing is allowed; the body is bathed three times, the maternal kin washing the right side and the paternal family kin the left. The body is laid on a bed on its left side facing east. The family is informed prior to the preparation, then the chief and friends, then the general public. The celebration on the night of death is to announce to the ancestors that one is coming to join them. Formerly seven but now three days of fasting (i.e. without meat or fufu) and mourning then ensue. Funeral dirges are sung which extol the dead and philosophize on life and death. Usually the corpse is buried a day or two after death, sometimes in a room of the house.

Blood relatives shave and heap their hair at the house entrance; a great amount is an honour for the deceased. If the person had been very old, he and the living grandchildren were smeared with white clay *(hyire),* a mark of victory for having lived long and produced many off-spring. Today shaving of heads is often begged off by paying a small fee.

Women mourners at a funeral

The public funeral usually begins when the body has been laid in state; friends and relatives attend wearing cloth the colour of earth (dark red, brown, maroon, ochre). Libations are poured at this part of the funeral, as at the other parts. It is important for women to wail openly and loudly, but improper for a man to shed tears in public. Dancing and usually drumming is an integral part of the public funeral, the point of the funeral is not to dwell on grief, but to look to the future and to help the dead pass into the other world.

Periodic observances are held on the 8th, 15th, 40th, 80th day and first anniversary after the death. There is a yearly meal *(aferehyia-aduane)* at which all ancestors are remembered.

The death of a stranger is very impersonal; a perfunctory burial is performed by the local chief who must bear the cost.

A widow *(kunafo)* has the right to take advantage of the levirate. It is seen by the heir more as an obligation than as a right.

The funeral for a priest is the antithesis of ordinary funerary customs; at death he's draped in white. Also if a priest attends a funeral he must wear white.

All living things have an invisible spirit power *(sasa),* at death this can bother the living. Some animals are considered spiritually dangerous because of a vindictive *sasa,* although the animal may be physically harmless. The bongo *(ɔtromo)* is in this class and is very much feared. If the hunter kills one, immediately he begins a funeral lament; he cannot eat any *sasa* meat which he has killed.

III RELIGION

A. ITS PLACE IN AKAN CULTURE

"Religion, in the sense of the late Sir E.B. Tylor's definition, seems almost inseparable from every action and thought of such peoples" (Rattray 1927: v).

The Akan world is metaphysical, not scientific; this does not deny the existence of technology, as witnessed by the excellent work in gold, iron, and brass. The sacred state of the Akan is inhabited by humans, ancestors, gods, and spirits. There is no word for worship in Twi; the word used is *som* ("to serve"). Akan religion does not include the concept of original sin. Unlike other religions, the distance between the organic and the spiritual world is not unbridgeable. The various gods and spirits form a unified and ordered system of thought which makes order out of the vast diversity of experiences and forces one meets in daily life.

Prayer is conducted daily by virtually everyone in the form of libations poured.

There are various types of death: (a) *Abodwewu* is a natural death from old age or sickness, other than leprosy; (b) *Nsramuwu* is an honourable death by violence, such as in war or in a riot; (c) *Anwobawu* is the dishonourable death of a childless man or woman; (d) includes suicide, leprosy, drowning, and electrocutions, all punishments for sins; (e) *Amumuwu* is the death of a female in pregnancy, birth, or abortion, considered again as punishment for sin. Death during childbirth is a great disgrace and is called *owubɔne* ("bad-death"). In Akwapim it is considered an evil, polluting and endangering the entire community, the woman is buried outside the town and all her belongings removed from the town. Her husband is kept in seclusion outside the town for three weeks and is not allowed to remarry for three years.

Three types of ghosts or ancestors *(nsamanfo)* exist; (1) *Samanpa,* the ghost from a good death. (2) *Saman-twen-twen,* a ghost which has never left the earth, and (3) *tɔfo,* the ghost from a violent death.

Seven basic virtues of grace are requested during the liba-

Pouring Libation

tion or prayer *(mpayie);* (1) *Nkwa,* life and good health, (2) *Adom,* God's grace, (3) *Asomdwee,* peace of the world, (4) *Abawotum,* fertility of sex, potency and procreativity, (5) *Anihutum,* good eye sight, (6) *Asotetum,* good hearing power, and (7) *Amandoree,* Rainfall and general prosperity of the land and state.

B. GENEALOGY OF GODS

The Akan had, it is quite clear as historical and cultural reference points, the concept of a supreme God long before the arrival of Christian missionaries. The Supreme Being created all things; he manifests his power through a pantheon of gods, the *abosom.* Below these gods are lesser spirits which inhabit and animate trees, animals, and charms. Likewise the *nsamanfo* or omnipresent ancestral spirits are in constant contact with the life of man. The supreme God is known by many names, including *Onyame* (from *nya,* "to get", and *mee,* "to be satisfied"), *Onyankopɔn, Tweaduampɔn* (from *twere.* "lean on", *dua,* "tree", and *mpɔn,* "bend not"). *Otumfuɔ,* and *Ɔdomankoma.* Myth tells of the original nearness of God, but the pestle used by an old woman in pounding fufu continually struck him in the sky, so he moved far up into the sky; still the Akan believe that everyone may have direct access to the Supreme Being. Although every *bosom* has a special priest, there is none for *Onyame.* Although rare now, one occasionally sees a shrine to *Onyame* in the courtyard of a house, consisting of a three-pronged stick with a brass pan wedged in the prongs. This is called *Nyame dua* ("God's tree") and is always taken from *Alstonia congensis. Onyame* is also the source of many proverbs, has set pieces in the drum language which allude to him, and is represented in many designs in ancient architecture and metal-casting.

The *abosom* or gods derive their power from *Onyame* they usually are rivers such as the Tano, the ocean, Lake Bosomtwe, or tributaries of rivers. These bodies of water can have off-spring which become local deities, such as *Tano Kɛse,* in Techiman, the offspring of Tano.

A god requires a temporary abode and a priest; the spirit of the god may enter the priest and speak through him. These deities then are the mediators between God and man.

The earth is a spiritual power, represented as a female spirit of fertility, *Asase Yaa;* she has no priest.

Spirits in plants and animals may be potentially vindictive, so the person responsible for the death of these is careful to placate the spirit to avoid an encounter with a *sasa* or revengeful spirit. Woodcutters and craftsmen always propitiate the spirit of a tree prior to cutting it; the talking drum or stool carved becomes the potential abode for the disembodied spirit of the tree. The sacrifice (usually a chicken) at the tree placates and controls the spirit whose abode was destroyed. The drum then, is a shrine where the lost spirit of the tree and the elephant (elephant ear skin is used for the drum head) can be propitiated, tended, and utilized during the drumming.

The lowest superhuman power is found in the *suman, a* term loosely applied to all charms, amulets, talismans, mascots, and fetishes. The *abosom* are not "fetishes" and it is incorrect to call their priests "fetish priests". Each *suman* has its own peculiar taboos. These charms contain *dufa* or medicine which may have limited functions such as preventing neck pains, or preventing a priest from falling while dancing in a trance (a very disgraceful and unlucky thing). Some charms may kill other persons by sympathetic magic, others may be used as poison antidote, others cause impotence in any male who should attempt intercourse with the owner's wife.

C. PRIESTS

The training of a priest *(ɔkɔmfo)* "is a long, trying, and very serious business" (Rattray, 1927:40); the profession is no sinecure; it takes three years of training without any sexual intercourse during the training period. If a priest trainee is married, his wife has the right to divorce him. The first year of training consists of ceremonial ablutions. *Asoa*

leaves help strengthen the ankles for dancing, and *krampan* leaves the spirit of his god within him. Various bathings bring the *nkomoa,* the spirit of possession, out. If he breaks the celibacy rule, he must make sacrifices and begin the training all over again. He is instructed in dancing. The second year the trainee is taught other taboos, ablutions, and dances. He is introduced to *suman* and the taboos which can strip them of their power. He begins to salute the elders by bending on his right knee and touching the ground with his right hand. During the third year he is taught water-gazing (objects in the water, each with a special message), divining, how to impregnate charms with spirits, how to hear nature, and how to read omens from, for example, the colour of a fowl's kidney. Dancing lessons continue, and the new priest dresses in *dɔsɔ,* a palm-fiber kilt. It is taboo for both a man and his wife to be in the priesthood. The fees presented to the teacher amounted to six pounds and one bottle or gin in the past.

To become a priest trainee, one must have manifested the possession of the spirit of an unharnessed god. To control this manifestation of a spirit universally present, the trainee must make and consecrate a new shrine. The possessed man takes a brass pan, water, and specific ingredients including clay from a sacred river, medicinal plants, a nugget of virgin gold, an Aggrey bead *(bɔdom),* and a long white bead *(gyanie).* The ingredients are all pounded together and put in the brass pan while a prayer is said informing the spirit that its home is ready, urging it to give the village and people life and health, to answer questions put before it, and never to tell lies. Sacrifices and blood are then spilled over the new shrine.

In very like manner the blackened stools of the deceased are the potential abode of the spirits of their original owners.

Some shrines and their gods become very effective and well-known. In Kubease, Larteh, in Akwapim, is the Akonnedi Shrine, tended by a number of priestesses. The priestess of the Akonnedi Shrine has recently opened a branch of her shrine in New York. *Akonnedi* now has branches all over Ghana tended by priestesses trained at the

An Akan priest, ɔkɔmfo, *dancing in a state of possession*

main shrine who remit one-third of their profits to *Akonnedi* Some of the functions of these priestesses are the diagnosis and prescription of action for innumerable ills, mostly done while posssessed. Western medicine is not incompatible with this type of tradition, since the ills treated here are sometimes psychical treated by means of supernatural powers or occult forces invoked by a priest *(ɔbosom kɔmfo)* and sometimes physical i.e. bacterial diseases, treated by herbal medicine administered by a herbalist *(odunsifo).* These shrines are important in regulating social behaviour. A person may invoke the shrine in an oath, an extra-judicial outlet for emotions. The public is forced, then to take cognizance of a problem not within the bounds of the courts.

Probably the greatest shrine among the Akan is the Golden Stool *(Sikagua Kofi)* which is the symbol of the Ashanti nation's *sunsum,* the sacred emblem of the permanence and continuity of the Confederacy, and the chief link between the living and dead for the Ashanti. Komfo Anokye brought the Golden Stool from the skies during the reign of Osei Tutu 1700-1730), the time when the Asante Confederacy, was being formed. The importance of it is evident when one sees it rest on a throne like that of the Asantehene; also after the British captured Kumasi in 1896 the Asantehene, Prempeh I, was offered up for banishment, but the Stool itself was hidden. In 1900 Sir Frederic Hodgson demanded the Stool to sit upon, causing a new war to break out in 1901.

D. RITUAL AND MEDICINE

Much traditional medical treatment is of a religious nature. Traditional explanations of sicknesses, besides purely organic causation familiar to westerners, include preordained destiny, retribution of angered ancestors, witchcraft and sorcery, the result of anti-social behaviour on the part of the sufferer. This supernatural aspect of the Akan theory of medicine helps maintain a balanced mental and social health. The diagnosis of those illness attributed to spiritual causes is the determination of social wrongs and the cure involves the righting of that wrong. Many Akan live in a delicate equilibrium with disease parasites (e.g. malarial and intestinal

A Priest, ɔkɔmfo, *sitting inside his shrine*

worms), any social stress in the form of human hatreds or jealousies tends to weaken the person's natural resistance to such parasites. The importance of the priest in seeking out and curing the social disturbance is thus of paramount importance in removing the stress and allowing the patient to move back into an equilibrium with his parasites.

There are excellent herbalists who have very reliable cures for many purely organic ills. These medicine men are often hunters and excellent botanists.

The folk healers of the sick can thus be classified into three groups: (1) the herbalist *(dunsini),* (2) the herbalist who also deals in charms for witchcraft *(abirifo; bayi/bonsam Kɔmfo)* and (3) the priest *(bosomfo Kɔmfo)* who has a knowledge of herbs, charms for witchcraft, and is the attendant of a god *(bosom).* Nature is revered by these people, but it is also used to man's satisfaction.

E. ANCESTORS

The ancestors among the Akan are not "worshipped" as such; rather they are venerated and they are invoked to ensure their cooperation with and aid to the living. In the world of the ancestral spirits *(asamando),* it is believed that the ancestors live as they did on earth. The living have a sense of dependence on the ancestors; it is believed that they are constantly watching over the living relations and punish those who break customs. Each lineage has its blackened stools which are the shrines of the ancestors, and to which offerings are made, especially during festivals. The ancestral spirits are often invoked in the interest of agriculture.

After a leader who has led a good life dies, his white stool is blackened with soot and egg yolk. It is then called *apunnwa* and is placed in the stool room *(akonnwa dan)* as one of the clan's treasured heirlooms *(agyapadeɛ).* During life the white stool was intimately bound to its owner's *sunsum;* at the death of the owner the stool becomes a shrine or potential resting place for the person's departed spirit. The spirit can be recalled to adulate it, to give gifts, and to solicit aid from it, since the spirit acquires extra powers and influence after death.

F. WITCHES AND OTHER SPIRITS

Evil and wrong-doing are defined in terms of spirit forces which work counter to the spiritual sources of good in the form of the gods. The priests and priestesses *(abosomfo; akɔmfo; akɔmfo mmaa)* who work against the forces of evil in the form of witches and sorcerers were often those mistakenly attacked by missionaries as being evil.

Witches *(abayifo)* are adult females whose evil spirits can wreak harm only within the female's own clan. Male witches or sorcerers exist also and are called *bonsam.* A forest monster known as *Sasabonsam* lives in *odum* and *onyina* trees and is in league with the *abayifo* and the *mmoatia* or "little folk". These "little folk" stand about one foot high and may be black, red, or white; they communicate in a whistle language.

Many medicine men claim to have served apprenticeship with the *mmoatia* (they are distinct from dwarfs, *(pirafo).* In carvings *mmoatia* are represented with feet pointing backwards.

Again, one could list the *sasammoa,* or animals which are spiritually dangerous such as the bongo. Also, each clan *(abusua)* has an animal totem *(akyiwadeɛ)* which is actually a magico-religious prohibition.

G. FESTIVALS

Many festivals exist among the Akan; their foundations and functions are found in the traditional religion. The *Apoɔ* festival is celebrated yearly among the Brong; it is a feast of eight days duration in which complete lampooning liberty (in the form of song) of both superiors and inferiors (without punishment) is given. The people explain that if one's *sunsum* is hurt, the body becomes ill; often ill health is caused by evil and the hatred another person may have for you. In like manner, if you have a hatred for someone, it affects your own *sunsum,* so this time is set aside to allow any man to tell any other man what has offended him. This frees the spirit, and both *sunsum* become relaxed. During this festival there is theoretical sexual license; this isn't really taken

Scene at a Festival

advantage of since traditional court action can be initiated after the eight day festival. Punishment is therefore deferred until the rites are over. Should an aggrieved party take action he forfeits the right to investigation, to satisfaction, and he is also heavily fined. During this period all the priests and priestesses of the area are present with their shrines; they touch each shrine with every other one to re-establish communications which might have been lost. The major gods are taken to the river and cleansed of all evil. On the eighth day everyone makes a concerted effort to drive all evil from the area. Around twenty-five distinct *Apoɔ* songs are sung, and there is a specific *Apoɔ* dance for the festival.

The functions of the *Apoɔ* festival seem to be four: (1) psychological release, (2) a forum for public opinion, (3) a means to periodically chek those in authority, (4) a method of enforcing sanctions of behaviour.

The most important festival dealing with "the propitiation, solicitation, or worship of ancestral spirits is the *Adae"* (Rattray, 1923:92). *Adae* means "place for rest" or "lying down"; no work is done on these days when the living recall the deeds of the deceased and solicit them for mercy and favours. The blood of sacrificed sheep is smeared by hand on the ancestral stools (human blood is never spilled on shrines); a libation is poured on each stool. The offering, excluding the *omentum,* is removed in the evening by the stool-carriers. Everyone entering the stool room removes his shoes, and bares his shoulders as a sign of humbleness before the superior spirits.

Many ceremonies such as this *Adae* follow a forty-two day cycle. The details vary from area to area; the Brong propitiate both the *Samanfo* and the *bosom* at the *Adae* while the Ashanti only propitiate the *Samanfo.* The day proceding any *Adae* is called *dapaa,* "good/lucky day"; this is a day of preparation and work, everything being scrubbed.

An annual custom is always held in connection with the first fruits of each staple crop such as yam. The general name for a festival is *Afahyɛ (afa,* "festival"; *hyɛ,* "fix a day"). The chief's and head priest's house and things are refurbish-

ed by singing old women, the blackened stools are taken to the stream and sprinkled with water; pieces of sacrificed and new food crops are put on each stool. The spirits are invoked to start the new year and make it a good one, the new year beginning at different times in different localities.

The Akan annual yam festival, a purificatory ceremony lasting one-two weeks usually in September or October, is called *Odwira,* meaning "to purify/cleanse". (It is sometimes also called *apafram).* It is similar to the *Apoɔ* in that all disputes are settled, bringing harmony back to the town. The central part of the festival is the re-purification of the stools and the *abosom* shrines. It is a festival involving remembrance of the dead, harvest, and thanksgiving.

IV FAMILY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

A. FAMILY

The fundamental value of the Akans is their emphasis on the extended family and the mutual helpfulness and cooperation of its members. The family also exists in time, since the ancestors are always considered members. They are important in ensuring conformity to social norms because of their ability to reward or punish family members who are living. The ultimate value is the individual man, in terms of his interactions with the group.

The head of the family is called *Abusua Panin,* "family elder"; he is never an autocrat since any decision must be upheld by other elders in the family. The *Abusua Panin* represents the family on the local council of elders. As head of the family his duties are only matched by his rights; he is the family intermediary with the spirits, the administrator of all family property, the custodian of family traditions, and an arbitrator of all family disputes.

The family is a corporation and its functioning patterns are important because even the Asantehene governs the nation "on lines exactly analogous to those on which as a 'father', he still ruled his family" (Rattray 1929: 63).

B. KINSHIP

Kinship plays an important part in Ashanti social life; it is the source of critical norms governing jural and personal relations of individuals. Also the Akan political organization is based on corporate kin groups. Matrilineal descent is the key to the Ashanti social organization; it remains the dominant principle even after forty years of rapid social change. The lineage has its own specific *ɔbosom,* and a male lineage head presides over all lineage matters. There is a high degree of equality between male and female members of the lineage. Because of family and lineage dispersals, a lineage may be split into segments (*yafunu,* "children of one womb"), the members of which are uterine descendants of an ancestress

not more than four-five generations antecedent to the living members. The greatest social bond is between mother and child, to show disrespect to a mother is tantamount to sacrilege. The Akan father, on the other hand, is theoretically without legal authority over his children. There are complaints about the matrilineal descent system, but it is still adhered to because "its force derives from the political and legal system" (Fortes 1950:262).

A Twi proverb says *"abusua baako, mogya baako"* ("one clan, one blood"). Matrilineal descent is responsible for the laws of inheritance of property, succession to stools, and marriage. The *mogya* or *abusua* is passed down the female line as long as there are females to transmit it; the *ntoro* is passed down the male line as long as there is a male descendant to transmit it; a female cannot transmit the *ntoro* she has received from her father. Sociologically, then, the *ntoro* is less important than the *abusua* and is used primarily to help decide prohibited marriages.

The authority in the family is the MoBr *(wɔfa).* The female enjoys high status in the clan; none of her personal property can be acquired by her husband or males in her clan until all the females in her family have been exhausted. The female maintains the clan and can bear kings; if the females died in a clan, the clan becomes extinct. This is a calamity beyond words, as there would be no one left to venerate and propitiate the spirits and memories of the ancestors. "A king's son can never be a king, but the poorest female of the royal blood is the potential mother of a king" (Rattray 1923:82). The Queen Mother is usually the sister of the king, and she wields a great deal of power.

Although the father is in a weak position legally in regard to his children, natural rights usually outweigh theory and allow him to educate, chastise, and maintain custody of his children. Theoretically the MoBr has the power to choose a spouse for his nephew or niece and to compel their divorce. "The power which he possesses is very great, but its force and ultimate sanctions lie in the fact that it is a kind of corporate authority in which all the blood relations have a voice" (Rattray 1929:x8). It is interesting to note that the

cruel MoBr figures strongly in Ashanti folk tales.

All lineage of a clan are matrilineal descent groups from a single, remote ancestress (mythical). The clan itself is an exogamous division of a larger grouping which can be termed the tribe (e.g. Ashanti, Brong, Akwapim). Ultimately the clans are of totemic origin, so any member of a given clan can trace ancestry to a given ancestress who was usually helped in some way by a given animal which became that clan's totem. Reindorf lists seven clans for the Ashanti, Sarbah lists seven, Rattray lists eight, including:

Clan *(abusua)*	Totemic animal *(akyeneboa)*
Aduana	*atwɛre* (frog)
Asenie	*asenewa* (bat)
Asona	*anene* (crow)
Beretuo	*afweaaa* (mole)
Ɛkoɔna	*Ɛkoɔ* (buffalo)
Ɔyoko (Royal Ashanti)	*ako* (parrot).

There is great reluctance to discuss one's clan origins. *(Obi nkyerɛ obi ase;* "one doesn't disclose another's origin") because slaves and pawns were integrated into the various clans despite their origins.

In the cousin terminology system of the Ashanti, ego calls his Fa *((agya)* and his Mo(*ɛna).* Likewise FaBr, FaSiHu, and MoSiHu are called *agya.* MoBr, head of the family, is called *wɔfa.* Like ascendants are called *nana* regardless of sex; this term is also used in addressing any elder or a chief. Ego's Wi is *yere;* ego as husband is called *kunu.* All third generation descendants are called *nana n'ka 'so.*

Because of the matrilineal system (ego's MoBrDa child may be his (a) own child if he marries MoBrDa, (b) wife, because if he doesn't choose to marry his MoBrDa, he then has absolute right to her daughter.

A brother in-law on husband's or wife's side is called *akonta.* A brother or siter is called *nua (kuma,* younger; panyin, *elder).*

Fasi *(sewa)* and MoBr *(wɔfa)* produce the cross-cousin offspring which it is preferred ego marry. Ego's WiSi may be termed both *akumaa* or *yere (kuma).* WiFa, WiMo, SoWi,

and DaHu are all called *ase.* SiSo, SiDa, MoSiDaSo, MoSiDaDa are all called *wɔfase.*

C. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

There is no caste system among the Akan, although society could, in the past, be divided into four classes: (1) royalty, (2) free commoners, (3) pawns, and (4) slaves. Royalty refers to all those persons descended from any person who founded a given town or village, since it is those who have so descended who are the traditional leaders.

A pawn *(awowa;* plural *nwowa)* is "a Person or thing given to a creditor *(osikani)* by a debtor *(ɔkafoni)* as security for what he owes, on the understanding that, on payment, the person or thing will be returned to its original owner (Rattray 1929:47). The practice is *awowasi;* the verb is *"si awowa;"* interest is called *nsiho.* In olden times the head of a family group *(abusua panin)* had the power to put any of the members of his *abusua* into pawnship, even as punishment for bad behaviour.

Slaves were not allowed to mix freely with free-men or allowed to go to the chief's palace; they were required to work harder and to do the dirty work. Moreover they were not accorded a funeral custom. There were four sub-classes of slaves. (1) The *akoa* (plural *nkoa)* originally referred only to voluntary servitude of a person to, for example, his MoBr *(wɔfa).* The best translation originally would have been "subject"; in reality it came to include persons whom another person had power over, merging with *ɔdɔnkɔ,* the slave proper. (2) *ɔdɔnkɔ* (plural *nnɔnkɔ, nnɔnkɔfo* is a non-Akan purchased expressly as a slave. The second generation would always be termed *akoa.* They were usually bought at Salaga, a male costing the equivalent in cowries of 9,000 kola nuts, a female costing the equivalent of 14,000 kola nuts. Outside of Ashanti the master had life and death prerogative over his slaves; within Ashanti any execution had to be performed by the Asantehene's executioners. (3) The *dommum* was a foreign prisoner of war or tribute. All these

classes of slaves could marry, own property (including his own slaves), swear an oath, and become heir to his master. A slave could swear an oath to be taken by another master if badly treated. Slaves could be sacrificed, and a reserve of them were kept at a special village *(Akyere kurom)*. (4) An *akyere* was a slave condemned to death for an offense but saved until a sacrifice was required.

D. INHERITANCE[1]

Inheritance is arranged by the *ohurew* or executor responsible for all the funeral arrangements. Ideally the *ohurew* is the deceased's father's younger brother's son, in the same generation but preferably junior to the deceased. For a female deceased the ideal is FaBrDa. A dying declaration *(samansew)* is binding if there are witnesses. Although the *ohurew* is required to settle and distribute the estate, there is a constant problem of distinguishing family from self-acquired property. "The uncle seems in theory the heir to the personal property of his nephews, but almost invariably he waives his right in favour of the deceased's next eldest brother" (Rattray 1929:4). Next in line after eldest brother is the next brother in age until all the deceased's brothers are exhausted. Next is SiSo, then MoSiSo, and finally after all the male possibilities are exhausted the females are eligible for male property, beginning with the deceased's eldest sister. If all relatives are dead, the property (but never a stool) is inherited by a slave, even before the man's actual children – who are completely excluded. This same line of inheritance is followed in the succession for a stool, except that the line stops at slaves and women.

For a woman's property the same line of inheritance is followed except that the line begins with the deceased's mother, her sisters by seniority, her own daughters by seniority, until all possible female heirs are exhausted; then male heirs are called; if all heirs are extinct, then the property is given to a female slave. In practice any heir may be passed over if the entire family concurs.

An Akan chief riding in a palanquin

V. GOVERNMENT AND LAW

A. TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT

The political organization of the Akan is ultimately based on kinship, each lineage being a political unit with its own headman acting as its representative on higher councils. The household head is mirrored in instituted officers of progressively larger political units; for the Ashanti the hierarchy begins with the household head (i.e. the one responsible for the care and maintenance of members of a family in a house) and progresses to the family head *(abusua panin),* the village headman *(odikro),* the territorial chief *(ɔhene),* the paramount chief of a division of the Asante Confederacy *(Ɔmanhene)* and finally the head of the Asante Confederacy, the Asantehene. On each level the council for the headman is organized similarly and the duties of each headman are similar, except, of course, in terms of the population and geographical area the headman is held responsible. On each level the headman is responsible for law and order; defence, a maintenance of amicable relations within his given group, and adequate communications maintained between the living group and the ancestors and the gods.

For the Akan the chief is not only ruler but symbol of tribal identity and the embodiment of Akan values. The political symbol of chieftaincy is the blackened stool. Chiefs are sacred because of the link they have with the ancestors and gods by way of the stool. While enstooled, the chief's blood is sacred; in case of injury or loss of blood, a sheep must be sacrificed to prevent danger befalling the chief's subjects. Respect is more for the office represented by the stool, less for the actual incumbent; should a chief be destooled he may be shown much disrespect, abused and may be banished.

The most important office, outside of that of Asantehene is that of *Ɔmanhene* or paramount chief. Succession to the stool is matrilineal, the successor often being the brother or son of the Queen Mother. Usually succession is limited to a specific kindred branch of a given clan, but occassionally succession may be transferred to another kindred.

There is no strict adherence to the rule of primogeniture. The paramount chief is the pivotal point of divisional unity; he is the intermediary between his subjects and the royal ancestral spirits; he is custodian of customary law and its practice: he is leader of the area in war and, for the Ashanti, the local link with the Golden Stool. His person is sacred only as long as he is occupying the stool (i.e. the office); his judgements are taken as the decisions of the ancestors. His duties and limitations are strictly defined; while sitting on a traditional court case he must always speak through his spokesman *(ɔkyeame).* His duties and limitations are recited publicly at his enstoolment; they include an admonition never to act without the advice of the councillors and the Queen Mother. To fail in this may lead to his destoolment, a procedure which may be initiated by any commoner or councillor. Although outwardly an autocrat, in reality every decision must be discussed and agreed upon by the councillors and Queen Mother, to whom all in the tribe have access (via their family head, village headman, etc.). Even the selection of an heir apparent, although nominally in the hands of the chief and Queen Mother, must be agreed upon by a majority of the councillors *(mpanyimfo).* The *mpanyimfo* must swear an oath of allegiance to the chief, just as the chief must swear an oath of allegiance to the unwritten consitution and to the Asantehene. He is very careful to respect the decentralization of his power because those who select him can just as easily destool him. Rattray describes the situation thus: "Democracy is again triumphant,though ready to allow autocracy to boast the semblance of power" (Rattray 1929:85). The fact that the stool is always greater than the one who occupies it is in itself a check on despotism. After the death or destoolment of a chief certain subchiefs *(werempefo)* sieze and carry off the blackened stools without which a new chief cannot be enstooled; this counters the ambitions of contenders for the stool.

The person next in order of importance in the Native State is the Queen Mother "(Rattray 1929:88). She has a large say in picking a new chief, having, in theory, an absolute veto. It is she who announces the successor after a destoolment,

but only after discussion, consultation, and agreement with the *mpanyimfo,* who in turn have discussed the choice with the populace. She always sits on the left side of the chief; she alone has the right to rebuke the chief, the spokesman, and the councillors, and to directly address the court and litigants. When a chief travels abroad (except during war) she must accompany him. She had the right to pick one of the chief's senior wives. Acting as custodian of the stools of deceased queen mothers, she is responsible for performing various rites at the *Adae* ceremonies. It is required of her to be in daily attendance at the palace except when she is ill; she attends all court sessions except during her menstrual periods.

She is in charge of the morals of the younger generation and is in attendance at birth and female puberty rites.

The precedence of the sub-chiefs often varies with the area and historical events; the main chiefs are in charge of various parts of the army. Two important offices often inseparably linked are those of the Korontihene *(ko,* "fighting"; *tiri* "head"; *hene* "chief") who commands the army if the chief doesn't go to war, and *Akwamuhene,* the second in command. The clan chief is called the *abusuahene.* Different war commanders include the right flank, *twafohene* (who leads the advance-guard), *adontenhene* (who leads the main fighting body), *ankɔbeahene* (Leader of the chief s personal body-guard), and the *kyidɔmhene* (commander of the rear-guard).

A very important office is that of *Gyasehene;* he is head of the *ahemfie* or palace and has control over the following *gyasefo, or attendants:*

Gyasefo	Duty
Akyeame	Spokesmen
Nkonnwasoafo	stool-carriers
Asokwafo	drummers/horn-blowers
Akyiniyekyimfo	umbrella carriers
Banmufo	caretakers of the royal mausoleum

Aguareyefo	bathroom attendants
Akragua'fo	chief's "soul-washers"
Ahoprafo	elephant-tail switchers
Papasoafo	fan-bearers
Soodofo	cooks
Asoamfo	hammock-carriers
Akokwafo	floor-polishers
Sanahene & Afotosanfo	treasurer and sub-treasurer
Adabra	eunuchs (both testes and penis removed)
Nseniefo	heralds
Afonasoafo	sword-bearers
Atumtufoɔ	gun-bearers
Akyɛmfo	shield-bearers
Kwadwomfo	Minstrels
Abrafo	executioners
Nsafisoafo	palm-wine tappers
Akumasoafo	axe bearers
Nsumankwafo	chief's herbalists

"In some divisions, it will be noted, several of such officials may come under another Elder other than the *Gyasehene* or fall under the direct control of the Chief or Queen Mother" (Rattray 1929:91). The stool of the *Gyasehene* may be patrilineal or filled by nomination.

After the Denkyira were overthrown, Osei Tutu and Komfo Anɔkye began to build the powerful Asante Confederacy, which lasted two hundred years. The primary feature of the Ashanti constitution was its decentralization. The family, clan, and tribe survived in the new nation, even though the Asantehene sought "to make territorial considerations, and not the incident of kinship, the basis of State control" (Rattray 1929:80).

Komfo Anɔkye (Kwame Frimpɔn Anɔkye Kotowbere) was related to Osei Tutu, both of them belonging to the Oyoko clan. Anɔkye a great priest (komfo), took three cuttings of the Kumnini (*kum,* "kill"; *nini,* "python") tree, and planted one each at Juaben, Kumawu, and Kumasi. The first two died, while the one at Kumasi lived and this city was chosen as the head of the *Asantefo* or Ashanti people.

Carrying the Golden Stool

Anɔkye had great administrative abilities (besides his warring enterprises) and was in large part responsible for the success of the Confederacy.

He conciliated captured enemies by givgig captured chiefs important posts near the Asantehene. He instituted the national *Odwira* festival and he was responsible for the arrival of the Golden Stool and all it symbolizes.

The subjects within the Asante Confederacy were required to render services *(ɔsom)* to the Asantehene. The most important was an oath of allegiance; this involved mandatory military service when required *(ɔsakɔ)*, refusal was penalized by death. An oath of fealty *(nsua)* in which the Kumasihene was acknowledged as the Asantehene was required. The Asantehene curtailed the power of the *Amanhene* to declare and wage war on each other; he also restricted their right to inflict capital punishment on their subjects.

One of the main revenue sources was duties collected on personally-acquired, not family, property payable on the death of a tenant *(ayiyɔ, ayibuadie)*. The Asantehene had the right to collect a levy to cover a chief's funeral *(ayito)*, levies for making stool purchases or paying debts *(ɔmanto)*, war taxes after the war *(apeato)*, a levy on the enstoolment of a new chief *(fotobo)*, a levy for certain religious customs *(musuo)*, and all war spoils *(asade)*. These taxes helped pay the expenses for arms, regalia, funerals, and hospitality which the Asantehene must provide all visitors.

If a tenant died without heirs his property could be escheated back to the Asantehene *(awunyade)*. A share of any treasure found must be given to the Asantehene also *(ahuntuo)*. Tenants or subjects were required to provide certain agricultural services to the chief *(afum adwumayɔ)*.

The Asantehene used to control all trade in and out of Ashanti *(batadie);* traditional trade routes carried Asanti kola nuts to the north where they were exchanged for slaves, cattle, and shea butter. Slaves, cattle, and shea butter. Slaves and Ashanti gold were taken to the coast where they were exchanged for rum, guns, metal rods, salt, and soft goods. The trading was run by a sub-chief, the *batahene.* An Ashanti man would carry one load of kola nuts *(apakan),* usually 2,000, to Salaga, The load would cost 5/- to 10/-[1] in Ashanti and retailed at 1 to 2 pounds[2] in Salaga. A Slave could be bought for 10,000 – 14,000 nuts. In olden times a law required that all kola nuts be first exchanged for cowries *(sidie),* 2,000 nuts getting 6,000 – 12,000 cowries. The Asantehene had all roads guarded, and a 3/- to 4/-[3] toll was collected from each trader; no Northern Territory traders were permitted south of Salaga. All trading profits went to the Asantehene's treasury. A male slave would be sold on the coast for an equivalent of about twelve pounds[4] of goods. This revenue was lost when the Asantehene lost his monopoly on trade.

Court fees and fines also went to the Asantehene's treasury, *Aseda* was a sum paid to the court by the party found innocent for thanksgiving and ensuring witnesses to the decision. *Atitodeɛ* "blood-money", was paid in lieu of the death penalty; it might be as much as 100 *pereguan* (about ₵1600.00).

Despite illiteracy, more or less accurate accounts were maintained. An *adaka kɛse* or "large box" was divided into three equal compartments. The treasurers were in charge and the key was kept under the chief's sleeping mat. Each compartment contained packets of gold-dust; the currency, worth one *pereguan* (about ₵16.00); three witnesses were present at every transaction. Lesser amounts were kept in another box until one *pereguan* was collected, then it would be transferred to the *adaka kɛse.* Current account expenditure were taken from another box, *apem adaka* (1,000 box"), which contained "small change" made from the one *pereguan* packets in the *adaka kɛse;* every time one of these packets

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1. 50p to ₵1.00
2. ₵2.00 to ₵4.00
3. 30p to 40p.
4. ₵24.00.

was removed to make "small change" a cowry shell was put in its place. Different amounts of change were put in special divisions of the *apem adaka,* and payments from this box were likewise marked by replacements by cowries. Each day accounts would be balanced. This system "produced remarkably efficient results"; "the memory of these people for such details is extraordinary" (Rattray 1929:118).

The revenue collected was always circulating. "The idea of a chief as being a man personally wealthy was unknown" (Rattray 1929:116). Everything a chief brought to the stool became stool property and was irretrievable on destoolment. "A destooled chief was generally allowed one wife, a young boy as servant, and a little gold-dust; he was then banished to some small village, and was on no account permitted to return to the capital town, on pain of death" (Rattray 1929:116). His stool would not be blackened and his name would not be mentioned at any *Adae* ceremony. Of all West Africans, the Asanti have the "reputation of being the bravest and most warlike" (Rattray 1929:120). This warlike bond and the allegiance to the Asantehene tied the divisions together; on the cessation of hostilities, the divisions reverted to *status quo ante* and were essentially independent. An important ancestral stool was always taken to war; all chiefs would prefer surrender rather than allow the stool to fall into the hands of the enemy. As a last resort the chief, and his war captiains would poison themselves or blow themselves and their regalia up. A proverb says "If it is a choice between dishonour and death, death is preferable" *(Fɛdeɛ ne Wu a fanyinam owuo).* Chiefs and soldiers acted as his own quarter-master; a lack of sanitation often led to decimating epidemics of dysentery and small-pox. A captured general was decapitated, his head being hung on the *fɔntɔmfrom* drums of the commander of the Ashanti army. The *nifahene* took the bones of the right leg, the *benkumhene* the bones of the left leg.

B. LAW

In Ashanti "religion is the keystone of the whole legal structure" (Rattray 1929:2). Law is derived from and based on the relationship between the family and the *Abusua Panin.* In the judicial process, the primary judicial principle is

that anyone in dispute can ask to have a decision on a case; the decision always fits the specific circumstances and not an abstract principle. The concept of the oath is of prime importance; an oath consists of forbidden words which constitute a threat to peace and require arbitration by chiefs. Whenever an oath is sworn, the plaintiff and defendant both are taken to the chief for arbitration; the one who takes the oath must appease the ancestors with a sheep and rum. Most cases deal with debt and character defamation.

There is a definite series of steps a guilty man must follow to gain forgiveness. The accusation is followed by admission of guilt, a plead of extenauting circumstances, a plea for mercy, exhortation to change, promise to change, and then forgiveness.

Most cases among the Akans are called *afisɛm* (house matter) and are settled by the *Abusua Panin* sitting with a council. Impartial justice within the kindred group or class was a strong feature of this local, family law. Traditional evidence indicates that the death penalty for intra-clan offences was once unknown. In its place was explusion/banishment from the clan, a fate leading inevitably to slavery for the expelled. The judgements of even an *Abusua Panin*, were considered as decisions of the ancestors using the judge as a medium. The judge was "thus placed largely beyond the risk of opprobrium, which a just decision, but one displeasing to a certain and possibly powerful faction, might have occasioned" (Rattray 1929:289) The law was thus scared, and one result of Christianity teaching people not to believe in ancestors was that "dread of supernatural reprisal no longer deters men from actions which human ambitions, greed, and hatred invariably dictate" (Rattray 1929:289). Extra-clan offences were avoided at all cost, since the entire clan of the guilty partv was held responsible. The expulsion from the clan of someone who committed a major crime against someone outside the clan helped to eliminate blood feud among the Akan.

Offences can be divided into two major divisions. (1) *Ɔman akyiwadiɛ,* tribal taboos, and (2) *afisɛm,* house cases. In the first case the central authority was bound to immediate action since the deed would have been offensive

A linguist with linguist staff

to certain supernatural powers which would wreak vengeance on those leaders whose duty it was to protect the interests of the supernatural.

Murder (*awudie)* was abhorred and was a capital crime, although a trial was a pre-requisite prior to execution. The spirit of both the murdered and the excuted murderer could wreak reprisals on the chief if the first was not revenged and if the second was not given a trial. The execution was by dance of *Atɔprɛ.* Murder was carefully discriminated from accidental homicide, most cases occuring in hunting require a payment to the *abusua* of the dead and a sacrifice for their ancestrial stools.

In some cases suicide was considered a capital sin. It was praiseworthy if done in war, if done to follow one's master to the spirit land, or if done to wipe out dishonour and ridicule. It was a sin when done to avoid the consequence of a bad deed or without an evident motive (in which case the motive would be considered evil). The spirit of a suicide was debarred from the *samando,* and it was eventually reincarnated as *tɔfo sasa,* a person with a cruel murderous nature leading itself to the same end. Often the corpse of the suicide would be tried and decapitated. The personal private property went to the chief (including slaves, wives, gold, livestock, annual and standing crops). Drunkenness was considered no excuse for murder or suicide.

Perhaps no other sin was regarded with greater horror among the Ashanti" (Rattray 1929:304) than incest *(mogyadie),* such as between parallel cousins. In the past both parties were executed; today the fine is twenty-five pounds,1 a case of gin, and twelve yards of calico to wrap around *gyadua* trees.

Both partners of a sexual intercourse while the woman was menstruating *(baratwɛ)* were executed. Adultery *(atwebenefie; di obi yere)* could result in death or various fines depending on the relationship between the partners.

Because of the importance of upholding one's name, for both the living and the dead, the greater percentage of quarrels and lawsuits deal with abuse *(atendidie);* the abuse of the Asantehene is a capital crime. Assult on any type of

1 ₵50.00

official might be a capital crime depending on the circumstances. Other capital crimes include treason, a plot to destool without a just cause *(epow)*, stealing *(krɔno)* from a chief, the *abosom, the* dead, or stealing the first fruits of a harvest prior to the festival. "One of the most terrible sins of which an Asanti could be guilty (Rattray 1929:311) was to curse the Asantehene" *(hyira Ɔhene)*, "bless king"), this was considered to be regicide.

Murder by witchcraft *(bayi)* might result in the witch being executed. There were, however, no witchhunts, since witches were powerless to work magic outside the clan. A witch's blood must not be shed, so the person was burnt, clubbed, strangled, or drowned. An accused witch might be forced to undergo an ordeal known as chewing *ɔdom*, the bark of a certain tree (not the *odum* tree); vomiting indicates innocence.

The commonest form of capital punishment was beheading by means of a small knife. Strangling *(abomporo)* by leather thong or by hand, clubbing *(abaporowa)* with a pestle or elephant tusk, and drowning *(asutwa)* are methods. Multilation might be given in place of capital punishment, such as ear removal *(aso twa)*, lip removal *(ano twa)*, nose removal *(ɛhwene twa)* or castration *(yi adabra)*.

The foremost sanction among the Akan is ridicule and subsequent loss of self-respect. To break wind *(ɛta)* in public is extremely disgraceful and an offender was often known to commit suicide. Any thief *(krɔmfo)* caught would be ridiculed by parading the person in the village with the stolen goods around his neck. A second offence would result in his being paraded in the village naked. A third offence would result in the person being abused by being called "thief"; the person could be driven away from anyone's property.

C. LAND TENURE AND ALIENATION

Land is considered in three respects, (1) the earth itself, (2) the usufruct or right of occupation, and (3) the crops, trees, and horses which are separate from the earth itself. *Asase Yaa* is the female spirit of the earth and it is a taboo for her to have anyone cultivate on Thursday. The earth itself

A sword bearer with sword

is not conceived of as being commodity which can be personally owned, bought, and sold. Traditional history records a time prior to the introduction of yams, cassava, and maize when little farming occured and most people were hunters, with the introduction of the above crops there was an exodus to the farming areas cleared in the forests. The soil became the immovable, unalienable possession of the tribe, whose kindred groups had exclusive rights to use portions of it and to possess the crops, trees, and huts grown and built on on it. Security of tenure is based on a continual working of the land, in addition to the rendering of all necessary customary services to the stool which owned it. Land used and later abandoned by a stranger reverted to the stool. If a member of the tribe abandoned it, he could reclaim it later provided trees he planted on the land were still bearing. Inheritance of the right to the use of the land is matrilineal except by a will. Those Akan chiefs who signed deeds of sale of land to foreigners assumed they were selling the right to use of the land, not the land itself. Fortunately, 24,000 square miles of land in Ashanti remained in the hands of the people during the colonial era.

Even today when the month of tilling approaches, an offering of mashed yam *(ɛtɔ)* and fowl is made, the blood allowed to drip on the *ɛtɔ* and soil. Asase Yaa is asked to give a fruitful year, to prevent snakebites, and to prevent wounds from falling trees and the cutlass. Parts of the chicken are thrown to the four points of the compass and a part is left at the sacrificial spot.

The *samanfo,* ancestral spirits, are the true land owners. Land laws stem from the belief that living landowers are tenants of the dead and trustees of the land for the dead. This determined the reluctance to sell the actual land, especially to a foreigner, and the violent opposition to the Crown Lands Bill of 1894 and the Forest Bill of 1911.

The stool lands probably were originally family lands. Stool land may be argumented by conquest *(konim),* by escheat (*awunyadie*), by gift *(akyɛde),* which is rare, and by forfeiture *(adwoyiye)* which is equally rare. The value of land is well-organized; a proverb says "all power is in land" *(tumi nyinaa wɔ asase so).* This value and the spiritual associations make an Ashanti highly unwilling to give up his land; the process of alienation known as "sale" was

altogether absent in the Ashanti code of land laws until quite recently. Even the Asantehene's right to a subject's property applied only to personal or individual property, and never land because land as such was never individually owned.

Leasehold is a fairly common form of tenure, especially in cocoa areas, in which the grantor lets the grantee use the land of the grantor at will in return for part of the crops grown. However, the "communal and family interest in land protected it from forfeiture, even with a clansman had committed some capital offence, and that the king, despotic as he was in many ways, did not dare to seize the offender's land, because he would have had opposition from the whole clan" (Rattray 1923:231).

VI. THE ARTS

A. MUSIC

Functionally, the music of the Akan reveals a great deal about their beliefs and sentiments; often it is difficult to separate music from dancing and drama and socio-religious context. Music among the Akan is socially-controlled. Although it seems ubiquitous, the type found is dependent upon the social context. Akan music may be performed by occasional bands at puberty ceremonies *(bragoro)*, at funerals *(ayinan)*, and at national festivals (such as the *Apoɔ)*; it is not performed at marriage or naming ceremonies. Ashanti adowa songs are now played primarily at funerals. At the Brong *Apoɔ festival* there is a repertory of several songs of praise, insult and criticism, commentary, proverbs, and religion. While these songs provide enjoyment, the appeal is first and foremost in the dramatic framework and the quality of the verbal expressions. The praise songs extol the symbol for which a chief may stand, not so much the chief himself. Insult songs are socially approval releases from repression and aid in social and political control.

One very important social context for Akan music is the funeral. Wailing does not befit a male, hence the singing of funeral dirges performed by women. The dirge is the "culminating point of the preparation for the funeral as well as the beginning of public mourning" (Nketia 1955:8). Dirge singing is always individual, never organized; the dirge is not intended to be danced to. Some festivals such as the *Odwira* set aside a day for the remembrance and mourning of the dead; at this time dirges are sung.

The social functions of the dirge at a funeral includie the following: (1) the dirge begins the funeral ceremony, (2) it gives the female mourners a medium for self expression, (3) it helps emphasize the pathos of the situation, (4) and "most important of all, the dirge is sung in honour of a deceased person, to mourn him, to elevate him, to adore him, to cherish his name" (Nketia 1955:18), a function which helps to link the present, the past and the future. Dirges are both clan and *ntoro* specific, hence lineage history is recalled by their use. Themes found in Akan dirges include references to the ancestors, the deceased, and their domicile; one also finds

An Adenkum Ensemble

reflections on life and death and messages. The dirge may be sung in two types of voice, the wailing, and the normal singing voice; the dirge is called *esudwom* ("weep song").

Most dancing and singing is accompanied by drumming, which is highly developed among the Akan. The power of the drums is found in the spirits of the natural materials used; generally, without the drums gods cannot be called to possess the priests. The drummers thus control the choreography and possession of the preiests.

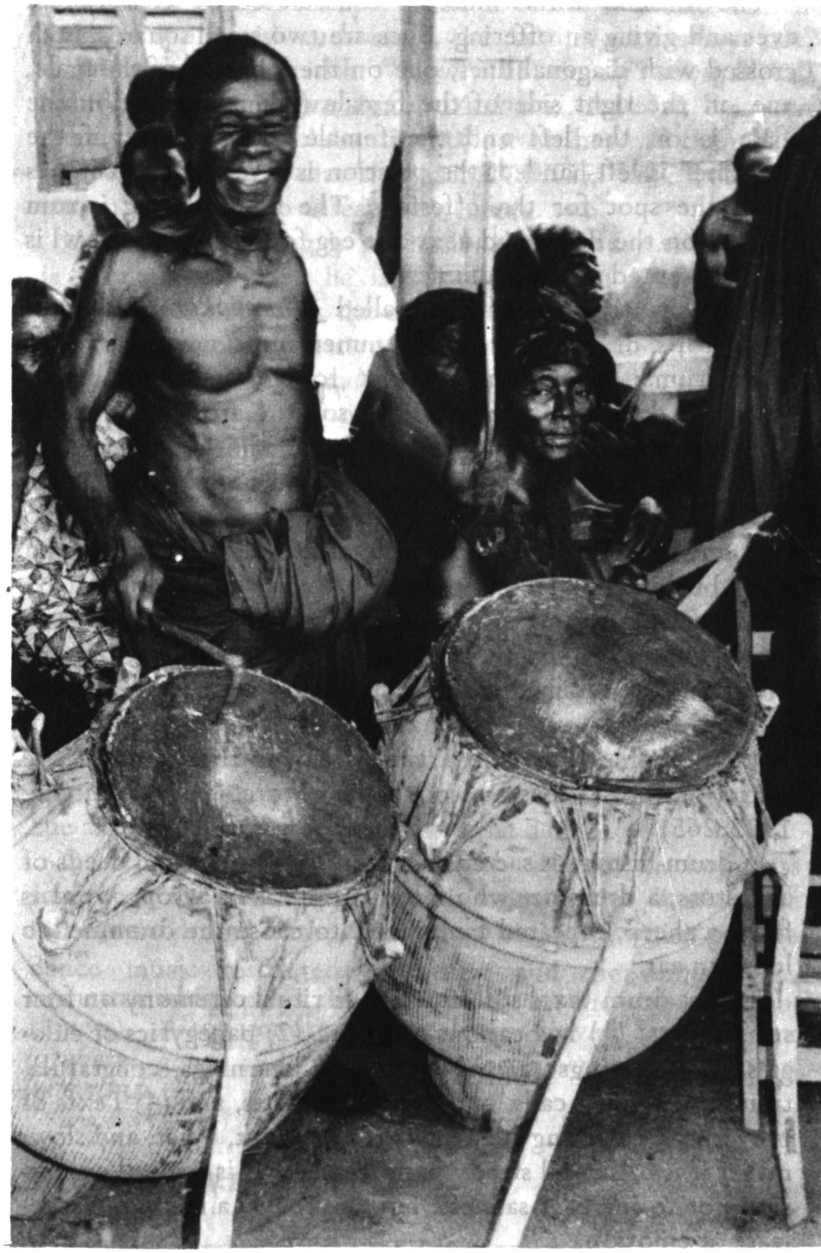
The Akan talking drums do not use a code; they imitate actual sounds and words. Tympanophony uses two drums, one male and one female, each with a different tone to imitate human words. The fact that Twi is tonal make the Ashanti durm language possible; every syllable in Twi has an arbitrary tone or musical pitch. Low tones are played on the male drum, high tones on the female drum (middle tones are not consciously made.) Gestures are indirectly reproduced in druming by loudness or softness of the drum beat. Punctuation, very important in Twi, is marked in the druming by a series of tones, a pause, then the next series of tones. The vowel, being a musical tone, can be easily reproduced on the tympanum of the male drum and called *akasaa* ("little speaker"); this makes a discordant, jarring sound when struck, a sound which possibly resembles the consonants. What is heard in the linguistic melody is, then, high and low vowel sounds, consonants. and an exact number of required syllables.

"The whole is punctuated and accented as accurately as can be done in print" (Rattray 1923:254). It is indeed possible to send drum messages across hundreds of miles faster than a telegraph system if the language is tonal and the same. In the past Ashanti warriors could be called from all areas to Kumasi in a very short time with this message: "Ashanti porcupines, seize your powder belts" *(Asante Kotoko monka ntoa).* The real difficulty is the reading or interpreting of the set piece; it is easier to transmit than to receive. The "sender and receiver have to be familiar with the phrases drummed. Thus, though the possibilities are almost unlimited in theory, they are limited as practised in Ashanti" (Rattray 1923:257). The drummer does, however, know set pieces dealing with all the important subjects he might be

confronted with, such as (1) calling a chief by name, (2) announcing danger in the form of fire or enemy, (3) announcing a death, (4) telling of the approach of Europeans, (5) summoning warriors to war, (6) providing festival set-pieces such as at the *Adae* which constitute a complete clan history.

There are two types of talking drums, (1) *atumpane,* two drums (one male, one female) played by one man, and (2) *fɔntɔmfrɔm,* different shaped drums, each beaten by its own drummer; these latter are used more often to drum proverbs. Only chiefs of the rank of *ɔmanhene* or *ɔhene* have the right to possess *fɔntɔmfrɔm;* no female, including the Queen Mother, has this right. If a chief orders one made, he presents the makers with a fowl (with curly feathers), rum, and gold dust. The only tree used is *tweneboa,* a very powerful and malignant tree whose *sunsum* is described as *nye koraa* ("entirely bad"). After the tree is chosen the workers protect themselves from its spirit by breaking an egg against the trunk; libations are poured and incantations said. The tree is cut, the fowl killed and part placed on the stump. After the log is hollowed in the forest, another offering of egg and rum takes place; the log is then taken to the village where another fowl and rum are offered.

After the log is procured the following must also be secured: (1) a tense membrane. For *atumpane* a female elephant's ear is used with the hairy side out. The edge of the skin is laced with a rope creeper *(bofunu)* (2) by hammering or loosening the pegs the skin is tightened or relaxed to tune the drum; (3) the pegs are called *nsoa* and are made from the *ofema* tree (as are the drum-sticks and supports). (4) the drum-sticks *(nkonta* or *ntwinta),* naturally-shaped limbs of *ofema (Microdesmis puberula),* have their handles bound with cloth or wrapped with *funtumia* (rubber) to prevent slippage. (5) The supports, *nyawa,* hold the drums at the correct angle. (6) *Akasaa,* the iron attachment for the male drum is attached by piercing a hole in the skin sometimes attached to opposite pegs. (7) White cloth *(nwera)* for the clothing of the *atumpane; fɔntɔmfrɔm* requires silk. (8) A small hammer made from ivory is hung on the right side of the drum and is used to hammer the pegs.



An Akan drummer playing the Atumpan

The finished drums must be consecrated by giving them eyes and giving an offering. Eyes are two small squares, each crossed with diagonal lines, one on the left side of the male, one on the right side of the female (when in position the male is on the left and the female on the right; if the drummer is left-handed, the position is reversed); these eyes mark the spot for the offerings. The first offering is rum poured on the drum and next one egg for each eye. A fowl is then presented to the drummer.

All Ashanti drummers are called *Ɔdomankoma kyerɛma* ("Creator's drummers"). A drummer must never carry his own drums; women must never touch or carry one. A drummer does not teach his own son the art of drumming. The drums are kept in a special room, the *atumpane dan. Atumpane* (not *fɔntɔmfrɔm)* drums hold blood in any form a taboo; when a fowl is offered, great care is taken not to spill any on the drum. *Fɔntɔmfrɔm* are always carried and played behind a chief.

Whenever a drummer is to drum for the first time on any day a libation of palmwine is poured over the drum edges, the drummer asking the spirit of each material which went into the drum to enter that material.

"The drums thus, for a time, become the abode of the spirits of forest trees and of the 'mighty elephant' (Rattray 1923:265).

A drum-history is sacred as it mentions names and deeds of ancestors; a drummer who falters or speaks a wrong word is fined a sheep, repeated faults used to cause the drummer to loose an ear.

Today drum texts still function in ritual ceremony on four set subjects: (1) invocations to spirits, (2) panegyrics or eulogies, (3) greetings (e.g. New Year), (warnings, congratulations, emergency calls, and announcements, and (4) Texts of proverbs. Drumming at funerals is never soft, quiet, and slow; rather it is brisk and steady in movement. It is a social expression not to increase sadness, but to provide a medium for release of emotion.

In times of war a defeated enemy chief's head, jaw, or leg bone might be secured to be hung on the victor's drums.

During the British occupation in 1900, at any state durbar held for the British authorities, the Ashanti drums beat out, unknown to the British, "Slowly but surely we shall kill Adinkra" *yɛde brɛbrɛ bekum Adinkra),* Adinkra being an enemy chief of the Ashanti who lost his head to them. The implied message is that the Ashanti have a knack of using patience and skill to defeat their enemy.

Mpintin drumming is processional music for the chief; it is also played when he is being carried in his palanquin. During state occasions the drums function to draw and keep crowds, maintain a festive atmosphere, provide the medium for self-expression in dance, give a public display, to avoid boredom and tension, to link the present with the past, and to re-emphasize state solidarity by reminding the people of basic beliefs and values.

A master drummer can drum directions to a dancer; the dancer must follow the drumming for the cue to end the dance in an appropriate posture or gesture. This coordination is watched for by spectators. Some dancers finish by shaking hands with the master drummer; drummers expect a gift or money. In state drumming a commoner must dance with his cloth stripped to his waist, barefoot, and without a handkerchief. Master drummers get impatient with dancers who ignore the drums or change step before the drum gives the cue and may drum rude remarks to the dancer.

Other important drums include the *donno,* the hourglass squeeze drum carved from the shea butter tree *(kraku),* the tall *bomaa* drums of the *fɔntɔmfrɔm* orchestra which provide dance music restricted to males, and the *mmurukuwa* orchestra which plays the dance music for the *abrafo* (executioners). Also important are long, carved ivory horns *(ntahera),* gourd and cowry rattles *(ntorowa),* and iron gongs *(adawuru).*

B. FOLKLORE

Folktales and proverbs are often amusing, but this is not their main function. Folklore serves as a mechanism for compensation and escape into fantasy, it validates one's culture

by justifying ritual and institutions, and it functions to educate the youth and help maintain conformity to accepted patterns of behaviour. Rattray says that each folktale "presentation will mirror more or less accurately the ideas of the people and their general outlook upon life, conduct, and morals" (Rattray 1930:IX). Folktales are often very ribald, although the tellers would "consider it highly improper to relate these passages if divorced from the occasion and context" (Rattray 1930:IX). Ordinarily taboo scenes are described. Often during the tale excellent impersonations may be performed. Great laughter occurs when characters, which in everyday life would be considered unkind to laugh at, are described. Up to a point, the story-teller is licensed and may expose undesirable traits such as the tricks of priests or the rascality of chiefs. Animals and gods are used as substitutes for humans. Dozens of stories exist about childless women who long for children. Other typical topics explain the origin of death, the origin of marriage, why the male came to desire the female, how fighting began, why monkeys live in trees, how debt came into the world, and why children should consult their parents. The main character is the wily spider Kwaku Ananse, and his wife Nkonore Yaa. Ntikuma is Ananse's first son. Three other prominent brothers are Nyankrohwea (Tiny legs), Tikenenkenen (Big head), and Afrudohwedohwee (Big stomach).

All tales formally begin with *"Yense sɛ, nse sɛ o"* (We do not really mean" that what we are going to say is true). The listeners respond, *"Yɛsesa soa wo"*. All folktales end with *"M'anansesɛm a metooyɛ yi sɛ ɛyɛ dɛ o, sɛ ɛnnyɛ dɛ o, momfa bi nkɔ, na momfa bi mmra"* ("This, my story, which I have related, if it be sweet, take some elsewhere, and let some come back to me").

Most of the several thousand Akan proverbs collected over a century ago are still proper today. A proverb is a crystalization of a group belief; the most often quoted Akan proverb says *"Wubu ɔkwasea bɛ a, obisa wo ase"*. ("if you tell a fool a proverb, he will ask you its meaning"). Many proverbs are specifically for children and contain "sound common sense (Rattray 1933:460).

A great deal of Akan etiquette is learned from folklore. One must never smoke, chew a chewing-stick, or remove a head-dress before elders; one must never break wind in public, nor use the left hand for anything other than toilet purposes or some ritual purposes. The right hand is used in eating and gesticulating; both may be used in receiving gifts. The left hand can only be used in such circumstances with excuse, or by crossing the arms. One must never use abusive epithets such as *ɔkwasea* ("fool") or stare in a person's face unless he's addressing you. It is improper to enter a house without first shouting *Agoo* and receiving *Amee.* One must avoid sexual offenses, guard one's tongue, respect other's property, and know one's taboo. One must never cross one's legs in front of a chief; a wife must never sit on a male, even her husband, in public. No. indecent language may be said unless prefaced with *"sɛbe o"* (Excuse me, please). One must use a euphemism to say that a chief has died. Use of the thumb in indicating something is a gross insult to the mother of any person present *(Woabu asɛm abatwe).* Interrupting the speech of elders is disrespectful, as is talking or singing or humming, while one is eating. While bathing *(adware)* it is an abomination *(musu)* to sing, chew a chewing stick, or to begin by washing the feet first, or for a man to have a bath together with a woman.

C. WOOD-CARVING

Wood sculpture *(ahonisene)* is limited by a taboo on handling nude figures. Emphasis is thus on more abstract works such as stools which symbolize the soul of the society *(ɔmankra).* The tools used are the adze *(sosɔ);* axe *(akuma),* mallet *(peewa),* penknife *(asekamba),* scrapper *(nwanee),* sharpening stone *(seboba),* cutlass and a boring tool *(fitii).* The best known figure carving is the *Akuaba,* (Akua, a name for any female born on Wednesday; *ba,* child). These wooden dolls are usually associated with fertility, but also for beauty, and as children's doll, or as a representation of an *aboatia.* They are generally carved from a hard white wood called

A pair of chief's sandals

sɛsɛ. If a woman desires a female child, she gets a doll with an oval or egg-shapped head; desire for a male child makes a doll with a rectangular head necessary. A religious or wise child is represented with a circular head.

Most carvers used *ɔsɛsɛ (Funtumia sp.)* and *Nyame dua (Alstonia gongensis)* for stools and figures. *Tweneboa* (cedar) is used for large drums, and *twafoyeden (Harrisonia occudentalis)* for umbrella frames. *Asipim* chairs for chiefs have *repousse* silver and brass work. There are some thirty significant types of stool design; also wood-carvers carve the staff of court officials, the staffs often headed by a representation of a proverb or a totemic animal.

D. TERRA-COTTA

No taboo prevents men from making pots (although they don't), but there is a taboo for women to make anthro or zoomorphic pipes. An Ashanti tradition says that the first potter was a woman called *Ɔsra Abogyo* at the village of Tafo; she learned the art from *Ɔdomankoma* (the Creator); even today pot-making is hereditary at Tafo.

The potter *kukunyonfo;* "weaver of pot" first digs the clay *(bɔ ebuo)* which may be white, red, yellow, grey, or brown; she then moulds by hand the pot *(nyon nkuku)* and polishes it with a pebble *(kokwa).* The next step is to burn or bake the pot *(to nkuku),* to smoke or glaze it *(pun nkuku),* and finally to ornament it *(toto nkuku).* No potter's wheel is used; the only implements are *aburo dua* (corn cob), *ntamagow* (rag), *tame* (small blocks used as a scraper), *kokwa bo* (smooth pebble).

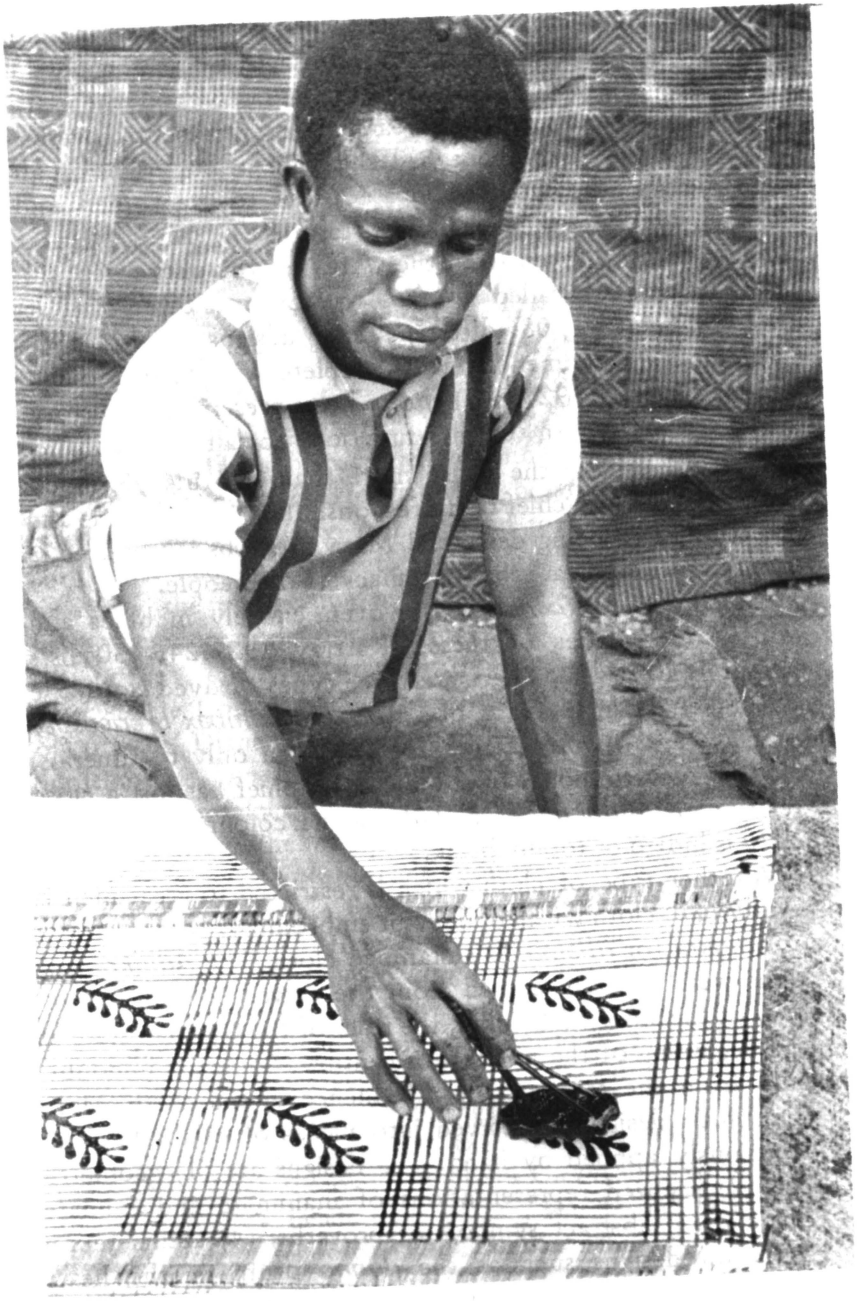
The five stages for all types of pots are (1) solid cone of clay *(ɛboa),* (2) the cone is scooped out and shaped, (3) the shape is better defined with the corn cob, (4) the wood and rag are used in further shaping and finishing the bottom, (5) the pot is burnt and smoked. The red-hot pots are removed from the fire by means of long poles; they are burnt to a dull brick-red. Those to be smoked are put in leaves which ignite and then quenched, producing thick smoke which permeates the clay depositing tar and carbon.

The most common types of pots include the following: *ananane,* used for melting shea butter; *kuruwa,* used for holding drinking water and often ornate; *ahina,* a large pot used for carrying water from streams; *ɔsɛne,* a cooking pot; *tasenaba,* a pot used for cooking soup; *akotokyiwa,* a pot used for holding palmwine.

Terra-cotta funerary sculptures in the form of heads, busts, half-figures, standing figures, figures seated on stools, and anthropomorphic vessels, are limited now to royals, a royal being anyone descended from the original settler of a town or village. They predated the Ashanti Confederacy, developing first to the south of Ashanti. There is no sexual division of labour for these terra-cotas; often one potter makes only a few during his entire life time. The Agni in the Ivory Coast, having migrated from the Kwahu area, have a funerary terracottal tradition with them which is also limited to royals. These images usually are used to mark the burial spot of the person. Morphologically the heads very much resemble the flatness of faces of the Akuaba. An additive technique is used to apply eyes, hair, and other features; the sculptures usually have ringed necks.

E. WEAVING

Weaving was first practised in the north of Ghana; it was introduced to Ashanti by Otaa Kraban, from Bonwire, a village still famous for its *kente* cloth. Kraban studied at Salaga where *fuugu* cloth was woven, the style taught by Fulani. In the Akan area, prior to weaving, people used bark cloth made from the *kyɛnkyɛn* tree *(Antiaris africana).* Kraban first used raffia as material resulting in a type of basket cloth called *kenten toma;* raffia was soon replaced by cotton obtained in the north. The weaving is still traditionally in the hands of men. The cloth was first dyed with juices from various plants. *Kente* was first woven from the silk of a spider called *okomantan;* later silk garments were imported, the threads separated, and then rewoven into traditional *kente.* Kraban's raffia and later his cotton *kente* were not known to have had designs, whereas today a cloth is not complete with-



Making Adinkra Cloth

out a design *(atomadwini).* The looms used in weaving are horizontal looms designed after those found in the north. Each pattern woven has a name; many represent the clan, social status, and sex of the wearer; many represent proverbs. Lond ago the Asantehene had the right of copyright on all new designs; he would allocate these to great men and women who kept them as family "tartan".

The name is taken from the weft, not the entire web; silk weft designs are called *babadua,* cotton ones *bankuo.* (Rattray illustrates 108 different silk designs in his 1927 Volume). The nomenclature is "replete with historical allusions" (Rattray 1927:245) and so helps preserve past history.

Different woven cloths function socially to enhance authority, usually the office more than the ruler. Symbols often remind the chief of his responsibility to the people and his liability to being destooled. Many proverbs reproduced in symbol form indicate the supremacy of the people.

Cotton cloth *(bankuo)* is woven entirely in blues and whites and shades of these; (Rattray 1927:245-250 lists seventy-two styles). There are three types of dyed cloth, the dye taken from the back of a tree (e.g. *bombax brericuspe)* or clay (e.g. *ntwoma);* all three are worn only to funerals. *Kɔbene,* a vermilion cloth, indicates a chief has lost a close relation. *Kuntunkuni* is a dark sienna coloured cloth, and *birisi* is indigo or totally black.

Another type of cloth which is restricted to great men is *akunintam,* cloth with applique or embroidery.

Adinkra (or *ntiamu)* is a stamped cloth. The *Adinkra* parterns were possibly copied from the carved column *(sekyedua)* of the stool of Adinkra, the ruler of the Gyaman state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some are undoubtedly from the strong Islamic influence in the north. More than fifty designs are carved into pieces of calabashes and laboriously applied by hand. The designs are (1) geometrical, (2) stylized representations of inanimate and animate objects, (3) abstract symbols of proverbs, (4) actual representation designs such as the *donno* drum or the heart *(akoma).* The dye used is made from the bark of a tree called *badie* and is called *Adinkra aduru* (Adinkra's medicine).

The white cloth is first dyed russet brown with dye from the *kuntunkuni* tree.

The silk *kente* cloth is the best-known type outside Ghana; it is woven in four inch strips *(ntomaban)* which are then sewn together; a man would wear the *kente*(as he would any of the other traditional clothes) in toga-style, the length varying with the person's age and wealth. The Asantehene has a special width of strip, considered most beautiful and is called *(Adwiniasa,* design; *asa,* exhausted).

F. METAL WORK

Kyerematen lists the historical chronology of Akan currencies beginning with iron *(dutu),* then brass *(yaawa),* cowries *(sedeɛ),* gold dust *(sika futuro),* and today silver *(dwetɛ).* Gold dust had an elaborate weighing system with weights made by the cire-perdue method using copper, bronze, or brass. The accessories for weighing were carried in a variety of pouches. The type used by the ordinary citizens is the *fotoɔ* made from the skin of an African civet cat *(kankane)* or of the Diana monkey *(boapeaa).* The chiefs use, in addition the *sannaa,* made from an elephant ear, the *kuduo,* as bronze container, and a pair of boxes called *apem adaka* and *nkotokwaa.* The *fotoɔ* never has weights which can weigh higher than a *peredwan* (eight pounds) which are used to measure dust for state functions such as the *Adae* festival, royal funerals, and the payment of indemnity fee required of a defeated chiefdom. The *kuduo* is a container exclusively for gold dust and may be reverenced as a shrine; it is used as a ceremonial vessel for religious and civic rites. Rattray says the *kuduo* are brass vessels long ago "used as ceremonial vessels in which to place offerings during the ceremony of "washing the *ntoro* and in other religious rites" (Rattary 1923:314). When the owner died, his *kuduo,* into which gold dust and Aggrey beads were placed, was buried with him; often exhumed later to pay family debts.

Goldsmiths in ancient times were an honoured class; they were privileged, along with great chiefs, kings, and their

An okra (soul) of an Akan chief

wives, to wear gold ornaments. Goldsmiths often became restricted to certain families, and tools passed from generation to generation. All the paraphernalia of a goldsmith, carried together in a skin, is called a *tutuo (fotoɔ)* and contains (1) *mrammoɔ* (sing. *abrammoɔ),* the weights (2) *nsenia,* the scales, (3) *nsawa,* the scoop spoons, some of which are highly decorated, (4) *famfa,* gold shovels, and (5) *mmumpuruwa,* the small boxes used for storing dust. The *mrammoɔ* can be divided into three groups, the oldest and most standardized being those weights with geometrical designs. Some weights represent anything in the animal kingdom including man; others represent inanimate objects and plants. All may refer to proverbs, although the meaning of most of the geometrical designs seems to have been lost.

Weights are cast by the cire-perdue method which entails carving the object in wax first, surrounding it with clay, melting the wax out, pouring in the molten brass, and removing the clay. Although many of the weights are very intricate in design, the weights are highly accurate. If a weight is too much, some is filed off, if too low a bit of lead is added. Some weight are purposely filed low for the goldsmith's monetary advantage. Certain fines and fees in native court "are called by the name of certain standard weights representing a quantity of gold dust of the value stated" (Rattray 1923:306).

G. COLOUR

Gold and yellow represent royalty and warmth. White is worn as a sign of purity, virtue, virginity, and victory. Green indicates newness, fertility, vitality, and primeness. Black is indicative of night, vice, melancholy, death, old age, and history. Red, worn by warrior *(asafo),* is a sign of anger, violence, calamity, or melancholy. Blue stands for love and female tenderness. Grey, the colour of ashes *(nso)* is the colour of degradation and shamefulness.

APPENDIX

ANTHROPOLOGICAL TERMS

Abbreviations:	Br, brother; Da, daughter; Fa, father; Hu, husband; Si, Sister; So, son; Wi, Wife; In charts, the symbol O means a female; a triangle means a male; an equal sign between these two symbols indicates marriage. "Ego" represents the starting point for naming other relatives; e.g. I (Ego) call my mother's daughter (MoDa) "sister" (Si).
Affine:	Any person related to the speaker by marriage; e.g. your brother's wife.
Clan:	Used in this book to represent any person related by "blood" i.e. through the female line.
Consanguineal:	Persons related by blood ties.
Cross-Cousin:	One's mother's brother's daughter or son, or one's father's sister's daughter or son.
Endogamy:	A marriage rule requiring a person to marry within a certain given group.
Exogamy:	A marriage rule which prohibits a person from marrying within a certain group.
Incest:	Forbidden sexual intercourse between persons regarded as being related in any given way.
Kinship:	The system of terms by which a person relates himself to other persons in his family.

Levirate:	A rule which allows a widow to marry the brother of her deceased husband.
Lineage:	A group of relatives only by blood; e.g. among the Ashanti this would include a man, his mother, his mother's mother, his sister, his children.
Matrilineal descent:	A kinship system in which ego is related only to persons through the female line; i.e. a man and his father are not considered to be related by blood.
Parallel cousin:	One's mother's sister's daughter or son, or one's father's brother's daughter or son.
Patrilineal descent:	A kinship system in which ego is related only to persons through the male line.
Patrilocal residence:	A rule requiring a wife to live with the husband or with the husband's parents.
Polygamy:	Marriage of one man to more than one woman at the same time.
Sororate:	A rule which allows a widower to marry the sister of his deceased wife.
Taboo:	Something established by social usage to be avoided.
Uterine:	Anyone related to ego through his own mother.

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